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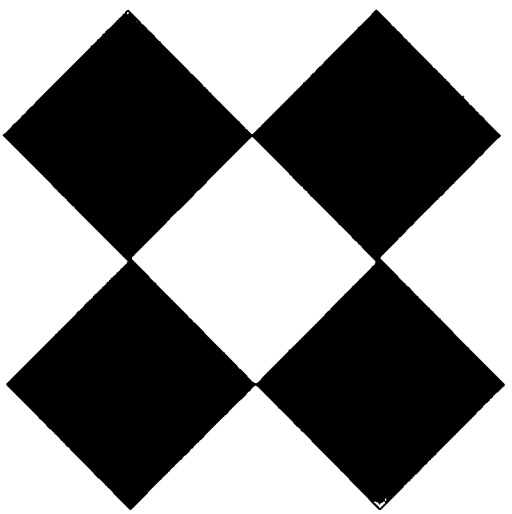

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DISCUSSION

REVIEW ARTICLE

BOOK REVIEWS

Change of Address

With effect from 16 July 2008, the Editorial Office has moved to Mumbai The current communication particulars are as follows

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'Correcting' the Reproductive 'Impairment': Infertility Treatment Seeking Experiences of Low Income Group Women in Mumbai Slums

Meghana Joshi

This article seeks to address women's (low income group, residing in slum settlements) experiences of 'disruptions' in the process of seeking infertility treatment at a public hospital in Mumbai It highlights the links between larger social and cultural norms regarding motherhood and family, on the one hand, and treatment initiation, interactions between women and the medical 'expert' and subsequent treatment decisions, on the other It emphasises understanding women's experiences of childlessness within their social contexts which, in turn, determine and alter their experiences of 'correction' of a reproductive 'impairment' The findings reveal that this attempt at 'correction', in turn, leads to a significant loss of women's agency and control, hence putting them at greater risk to physical and mental health morbidities

[Keywords childlessness, disrupted treatment process, doctor-patient interface, infertility, preventive interventions]

The Issue of Concern

Infertility remains a major gynaecological problem worldwide, despite huge strides made in its diagnosis and treatment While differences in data sources and analyses make it difficult to accurately measure or compare infertility rates, it is clear that the level and causes of infertility vary widely, both among and within countries (WHO 1991, Larsen 1996) Estimated prevalence of infertility ranges from 8 to 33 per cent depending on population and criteria employed in its definition Another estimate is that about 8 to 10 per cent of couples experience some sort of

infertility in their reproductive lives (Harrison, Bonnar and Thompson 1983)

In India, primary and secondary infertility figures, as given by WHO (1980), are 3 per cent and 8 per cent, respectively According to the National Family Health Survey 1998-1999 (NFHS II), 3 8 per cent of women between the ages of 40 and 44 years have not had any children and 3 5 per cent of currently married women are declared infecund (IIPS and ORC Macro 2000) With the associated psychological and social consequences, the female partner tends to be more adversely affected than her male counter-part (Guttormsen 1992 as cited in Aghanwa *et al* 1999)

A related concern is the lack of social research on infertility as a legitimate reproductive health right S Jejeebhoy (1998) states that there is a paucity of studies in India exploring the perceptions and experience of infertility There is also very sparse research available on the socio-cultural and behavioural correlates of infertility in South Asia She adds that research on sexually transmitted diseases, maternal health factors, poor health and nutritional status of women (leading to foetal wastage), age (adolescent sterility and infertility among pre-menopausal women), lifestyle-related infertility, previous contraceptive use, marriage patterns, occupational patterns, availability and accessibility of reproductive health services, levels of education, economic status and women's autonomy – all recognisable correlates of infertility – have not been given due importance in social research

The above literature strongly indicates that in India there is a lack of focus on the issue of infertility, it is treated as ancillary next to the problem of overpopulation in India As in many other developing countries, in India too infertility treatment is not part of the reproductive health services offered There is no public health programme that focuses on infertility in the Indian context, though the International Conference on Population and Development programme of action states that reproductive health services should include prevention and appropriate treatment of infertility [1] It is only a decade ago that the Ninth Five-Year Plan (1997–2002) document of the Government of India has included infertility in the comprehensive reproductive and child health package

The instant study was carried out to address the need for critical attention to infertility in social research and in the provision of reproductive health services Furthermore, such a focus will bring to light the experiences of women unable to bear children in their personal, social and cultural contexts and to suggest interventions which will help reduce the physical, psychological and social burden associated with childlessness

Methodology

This study is located within the paradigm of qualitative research methodology, which allows for a great degree of flexibility and iteration at different steps during the process of research The researcher collected in-depth data from women experiencing childlessness[2] through the use of narratives Core, largely unstructured, areas of inquiry were explored through discussion and without the use of any fixed questionnaire/ schedule (for example, every woman was asked to narrate about her life from as far back in memory as she could) Data was also collected from other women in the community through focus group discussions (FGDs) [3] Semi-structured interviews were held with medical doctors and paramedical staff in the public hospital where access to women interviewed was initiated [4]

The study was conducted in two phases The first phase essentially covered the observations in the public hospital, interviews with medical staff and in-depth interviews with five women from the core group This phase helped to identify the key areas of women's experiences, for example, meaning of marriage and children, husband-wife relations, various treatment sources, mental health distress and coping These key themes were the tools that were used to frame more specific questions for data collection in phase two Gaps in data or newer themes that emerged during phase two (for example, male response to infertility, and adoption) were discussed in greater detail with all women (core group from phases one and two), with repeated visits to the field

During the period of study, data was collected from a total of ten women, five men (spouses), two doctors, sixteen Community Health Volunteers (CHVs), two Auxiliary Nurse Midwives (ANMs) and three (focus) groups (of women from the larger slum community), comprising of a total of twenty five women The ten women who were the core research group were accessed from seven different slum localities in Mumbai These were the localities that had been assigned to the CHVs (for outreach work) at the public hospital, which was the primary site for data collection Some of the core group women met with the researcher at the hospital when they came to seek infertility treatment, while others were accessed directly in the community with the help of the CHVs The entire period of data collection lasted for six months between June and December 2004

Treatment Seeking[5]

The key findings with respect to treatment seeking relate to (1) *initiation of treatment*, largely catalysed by personal and social perceptions vis-à-

vis being childless, and (ii) *process of treatment seeking*, which was determined by women's larger contexts (at home) and their experience of interface with the medical world

Initiation of Treatment

Perceptions and consequences related to childlessness: It is difficult (and even unnecessary) to distinguish between women's fears/ perceptions and the fears/perceptions of their social world The need for children is related to achieving a status that they are supposed to fulfil in order to integrate into the community, rather than being a personal choice or decision However, some women related the inability to have children to a change in their perceptions of self Reasons for the need to have children were always related to a combination of personal desire as well as social expectation

Hence, the key perceptions in the community (including family, neighbours, men, women) regarding childless women and childless women's own perceptions on the need to have children intermingles and overlaps and constitutes the process of *appraisal* that precedes treatment seeking In addition to this social construction of meaning of childlessness, the women also analyse a host of consequences that are faced by childless women in the community These consequences range from changes in self-concept, changes in status within family and tremendous mental distress

Thus, the individual, family and community perceptions related to childlessness imply not only a personal sense of loss for the woman but also related social categorisation of this woman as '*vanzhooti*' (infertile), '*banj*' (barren), her complete subordination within the family – 'My husband and mother-in-law harass me Verbal and physical abuse is very common They keep pointing to the fact that I was not able to give my husband a child' – and a drastic change in family interactions and relations – 'My husband is going to remarry he says, now even my in-laws have asked him not to wait Initially we took treatment and there was no talk of remarriage, but now they have lost patience

Drawing from the above data, Figure 1 illustrates the process of initiation for treatment seeking, which begins at appraisal of one's position within the marital home and the larger community and the condition of being childless Women and their families make decisions to take action with respect to their 'undesirable' situation largely because of the personal and social meanings of childlessness for the woman and her family and the consequences of this condition

Box 1 Key Perceptions Regarding Childless Women Highlighted by Women

- Barren, hence capable of casting as evil eye/perceived as bad omen/harbingers of bad luck *('Childless women have the power to curse, they are a bad omen ')*
- Subordinate status due to inability to live up to their roles/norms *('Once a child is born, the woman has a say in the household and can demand things from her husband ')*
- Responsible for husband's remarriage given the circumstances *('If you cant provide him with a child, he will naturally get another woman ')*
- Causing pain and humiliation to natal and marital family

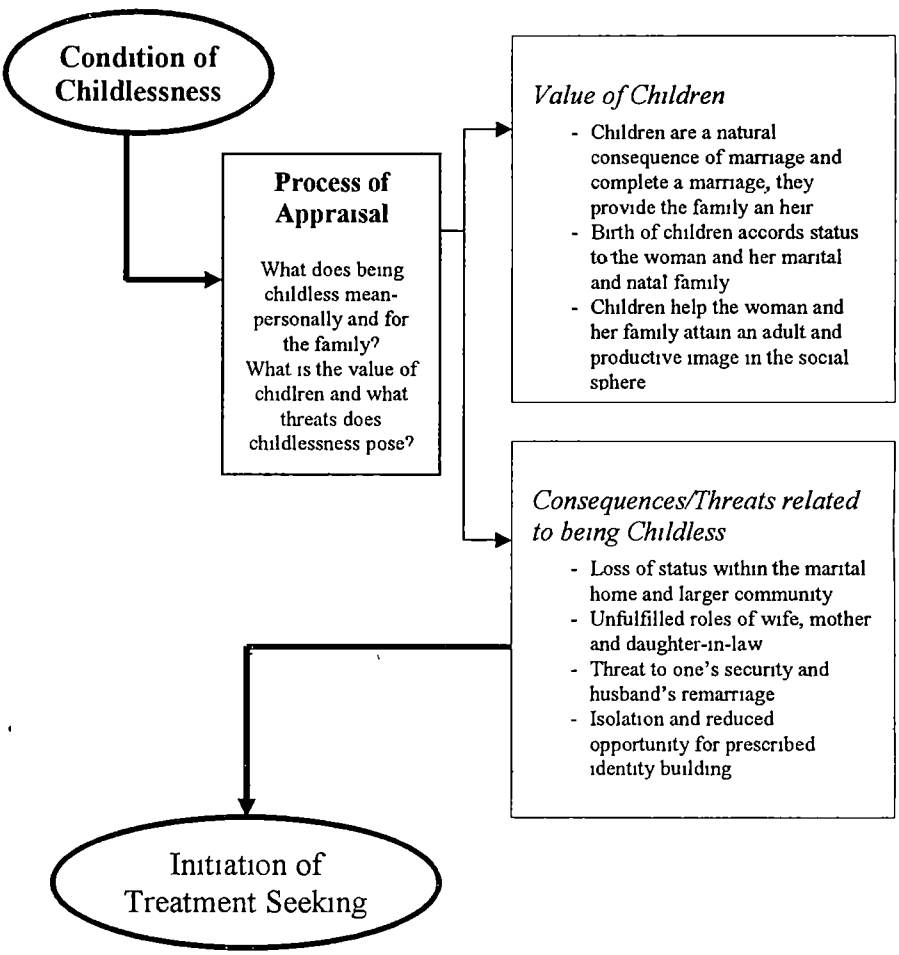
Box 2 Women's Perceptions on Need to Have Children

- Children help the women achieve status and fulfil her role in the marital home and larger community *('Even if a son is not born at least a daughter should be in order to prove the woman's fertility', 'It is better to have had a child who died than to have never conceived ')*
- Birth of sons helps the woman secure her position in her husband's home by providing him an heir *('All married women have to reproduce and provide an heir to the family ')*
- Children are a support for old age and also the reason for living and earning
- Children help to make the woman feel complete and give her life meaning *('A childless woman is incomplete, her femininity is unfulfilled, her house doesn't become a home ')*

Box 3 Perceived and Experienced Consequences of Childlessness

- Taunting and stigmatisation *('Most common label people use for women is barren/sterile')*
- Isolation from community activities and ostracism *('Childless women are considered as inauspicious, as capable of bringing bad luck and are hence kept away from all happy celebrations like marriage or birth of a child ')*
- Remarriage and further loss of status and control within household and community *('My husband keeps threatening me with remarriage He cannot wait to get rid of me ')*
- Violence and harassment *('My husband's way of expressing his anger and frustration of being childless is by hitting me ')*
- Blaming the woman *('They don't even know what the doctor has to say and they have been telling people that there is a problem with me and now they are coaxing their son to get remarried ')*
- Consistent and chronic mental distress *('I feel tension* all the time *Even when I am walking on the road, or working or sleeping It's always with me ')*
- Experience of related physical ailments *('Because of the tension I have constant headaches, also I can't fall asleep I feel giddy and nauseous ')*

Figure 1 Pathway of Initiation of Treatment-Seeking



Process of Treatment Seeking

Key decision-makers and loss of control: Most fertility decisions within the family are never completely in the control of the woman, even though she is the one who is bearing and rearing children A childless woman is even more vulnerable at the stage of decision making, especially fertility/reproductive health decisions, which are largely taken by husbands/older women/other elders within the family The need to restore 'normalcy' (conception and childbirth) is urgent, as infertility is a threat to the entire family's security, identity and status Hence, there is a strong tendency for family members around the childless woman to take control over the woman's 'diseased' body and make it healthy again

This loss of control over their own bodies is further exacerbated by the dilemma that women often face on the one hand, there is tremendous expectation to restore 'normalcy' by seeking treatment and achieving a pregnancy and, on the other, there are several barriers to treatment seeking within the home and the hospital When the women do access treatment, the experience is largely determined by the nature of social-role relationship between the women and medical personnel, which make this process of gaining legitimate entry into the adult world an extremely traumatising experience

In the hospital: Complicated line of treatment and lack of counselling: It has been observed in the study that many women who start treatment for infertility are unable to continue it or frequently change sources of treatment Hence, another crucial aspect of the treatment process is the understanding of the reasons as to why women are unable to complete a certain course of treatment or why they frequently change sources of treatment, why they are so inconsistent in complying with a particular line of treatment or why they probably never can exercise an option available to another class of women – an option which serves as a hope to restoring one's identity through the process of dignified and participative treatment seeking

The medical voice: Treatment inconsistency: Although in most cases treatment for women's ailments is the last priority within the family, medical staff often observes that in case of infertility, treatment seeking is very prompt Women may come as soon as they are brought (which can vary between few months to a few years after marriage), because, in this case, the status of the woman and her natal and marital family hinges upon her reproductive performance

Although women are rushed in for infertility treatment, the period of treatment is almost never adequate to complete a particular line of treatment Generally, there is a high drop-out rate, and change in and

irregularity of treatment The medical personnel interviewed stated that, with women, the investigation and treatment of infertility is extremely complicated A whole series of examinations needs to be carried out to diagnose and determine the required appropriate treatment This requires for the woman to make repeated visits to the hospital in order for a thorough investigation, which is often not done

Most common reasons for the inconsistency in treatment as stated by medical personnel were lack of understanding of the process on part of women, due to inattentiveness, non-compliance with the medical regime, and seeking treatment from several different sources When asked about the root causes of these inconsistencies, a few of the women CHVs and ANMs spoke about the high degree of emotional and social burden faced by women and their lack of agency in decision making However, most medical staff interviewed had no more to say on the matter

Women's voices: Minimal communication: The primary reasons for inconsistency in treatment, as stated by women themselves, bring out a set of other complications The long period of treatment combined with minimal or often no communication between women and the doctors makes this experience extremely stressful and confusing for women

Besides the treatment itself, women have often reported not being able to ask questions to doctors if they have doubts or not understanding the doctor's instructions There is no scope for asking for an explanation because the doctors have innumerable patients to see and often do not consider it necessary to allow the woman to participate in decision making about treatment

Women also report that it is most frustrating when they are not informed about the physical examinations that need to be carried out or the medication they need to take A further sense of humiliation and loss of dignity is experienced by women during vaginal examinations Most doctors are males and even though a female nurse is present during the examination, little attempt at putting the woman at ease or explaining the procedure to her is made Women often report wanting to take part in planning and decision making but state that it is impossible to demand that from the doctor

Additionally, women report not being told about the approximate time required before diagnosis can be made and treatment can be completed This lack of communication often leads to a break or change in the particular treatment even before one doctor is able to make a diagnosis In cases where diagnosis is made, the lack of space to discuss and participate in the subsequent treatment process itself creates a barrier A case in point is taking the sperm test of the male Women (and/or their husbands) are told that the male has to take a sperm test

three times and from three different centres However, no rationale is provided as regards the significance of doing so and couples are often unwilling to spend so much time and money on these tests They then consider this routine insignificant and unnecessary and do not come back to the doctor for further treatment

This discrepancy between what actually happens during diagnosis and subsequent treatment and communication of the procedure to women and their families is so large that often women do not see any value in continuing treatment where they are not adequately involved in and informed about the doctors plans for the same

Social expectations and unnecessary treatment seeking: Women are often reported to have said that it is not so much their need to conceive as it is everyone else's (family, community), which brings them to the hospital Social pressures push women to seek treatment when it is not necessary, causing a lot of unnecessary alarm at failed treatment attempts Women have been observed to come to the outpatient department (OPD) or rather brought to the OPD for infertility treatment under the following circumstances

- Inadequate and infrequent sexual contact Husbands are away either working abroad or are in occupations that keep them on the move and not in regular touch with their wives
- Often couples do not know the technique of intercourse, there are some who have not had penetrative sex and believe there is something wrong with them and they come for treatment
- Male resistance and unwillingness to get semen analysis
- Lack of privacy little space, large family size, therefore inability to have regular sexual contact
- Recurrent infections and unhygienic living conditions poor hygiene, improper toilets, early marriage and early sexual activity, hence greater vulnerability to infection, poor treatment seeking for infections due to associated taboo, multiple partners (mostly of men) [6]
- Tremendous social pressure leading to stress questions such as 'when is the good news?' and comparisons between different families especially neighbours whose daughters or daughters in law have conceived

The above stated are some of the key concerns related to lack of awareness, the need to promote safer sexual practices and community-level stigma associated with infertility that the study illuminates These external pressures to seek treatment even when the individual woman or even the family does not find it necessary, brings the woman into the hospital Lack of counselling and time with doctors provides very little scope for the qualified professional to understand the context within

which treatment is being sought This often leads to unnecessary investigation and medical invasion, thus leading to additional physical and mental trauma for the woman

Additional constraints: Besides the fact that decision-making regarding treatment is not in the hands of the women, a lot of the treatment process is contingent upon the economic ability to afford treatment It was observed that in cases where money was not a problem, treatment seeking did not have to be contemplated Whenever the couple chose, they could take treatment If they chose to stop seeking treatment, it was not primarily because of shortfall of money, but because of frustration due to no results

Women are primarily responsible for saving Women reported having kept money aside for emergency while their husbands often are very careless and spend money on entertainment However, it is almost always the husband's decision either to seek or not to seek treatment depending on how much money he can spare Even if the woman has saved money, she does not have control over that finance unless she seeks treatment without the husband's permission In certain cases the money problem is further exacerbated by the husband's unsteady income and/or alcoholism and/or expensive habits

Although women have found ways to keep money aside in spite of resource crunch, they cannot (almost always) decide how to use the money Some women have expressed the desire to work outside the home (usually as domestic workers) to bring in the extra finances needed. This alternative too cannot be explored by women without the consent of their husbands So, in every way their access to economic resources is restricted

Most women researched lived in areas close to the public hospital from where they were contacted by the researcher Proximity to hospital varied some had to travel by train, others by bus or autos, and some even walked Travel was never direct For one trip, at times, women could have had to take a train, then a bus/auto and also have to walk a distance before reaching the hospital Travel costs were 'higher than usual' during the rainy season, so, instead of walking, at times women took an auto to save themselves from a downpour

In spite of the financial crunch and lack of control over money, women still seek treatment The only way they can hope for a child is if they know that they are seeking medical/other help Sitting at home and not trying to find ways of going to a doctor is not the preferred option At these times when women do reach the hospital, it is important to note that they juggle with the management of not just money but also their time, energy and loss of wages

Besides the travel costs, were the costs incurred on incidentals Often the women had to take into account the possibility of spending an entire day at the hospital (doing tests, going to other centres to do a specialised test, waiting in queue, loss of time due to inadequate information about paperwork, etc) and this meant that they had to, in most cases, eat one meal during the day at the hospital canteen or in a nearby hotel

At times, women may be admitted for a laparoscopy, which requires an overnight stay at the least and this means at first having to gauge whether the stay was feasible at all In cases where the husbands were supportive, they would agree to eat out for a day, but in other cases the woman had to expend a lot of time negotiating for this one day 'break'

In cases where husbands too were getting treated, additional travel, time and money costs were incurred This is because no medical diagnosis about the man can be finalised unless the sperm test is done three times at three different hospitals to be sure of the diagnosis This obviously meant that besides this hospital, which was still accessible because of short distance, the men had to travel to other clinics not necessarily close to their homes, for testing For men, especially, this meant the loss of the day's wages or having to request the boss for a holiday, all of which put further pressure on the couple A trip to the hospital has to be planned a great deal in advance On the day of the visits, women have to finish their household chores at least one or two hours before the usual time in order to get to the hospital in time to see the doctor/avoid large amounts of waiting periods or long queues

The process of treatment seeking that emerges from the above data is shown in Figure 2

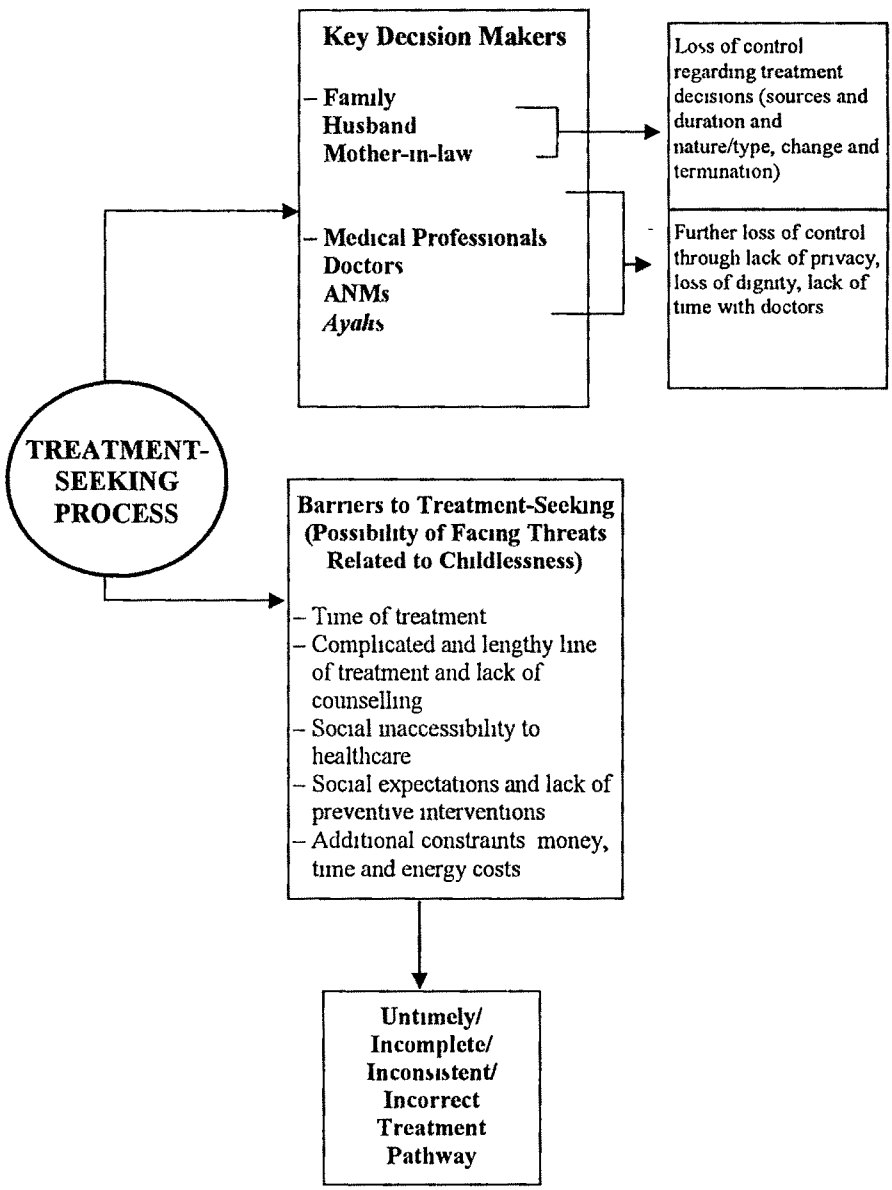
Recommendations

Based on the above findings we may make the following recommendations for further research and interventions

Creating Enabling Hospital Environments

Within the hospital, by sheer virtue of entering the medical set up, women are at a greater risk to mental distress and discontinuation of, or inconsistency in, treatment seeking Often the hospital setting does not encourage male involvement as the Gynaecological OPD is considered as a place 'only for women' The most important concerns of women in this study were lack of privacy, the humiliating experience of vaginal examination, the callous attitudes of doctors and *ayahs* (female attendants) inadequate time spent with them, and almost no counselling or sharing with the women about the line of treatment required

Figure 2 Treatment-Seeking Process



This study highlights the need to create an enabling environment with the hospital set up such that women are able to share and discuss their problems and understand the treatment required It is essential that not only do the paramedical staff but also doctors undergo training in counselling patients during such traumatic periods Additionally, an infertility counselling clinic (with a multi-disciplinary team) within the OPD, like the Voluntary Counselling and Testing Centre (VCTC) for HIV/AIDS (this is available in the particular hospital where the study was conducted) is recommended

Outreach: Involving Men and Families

The role of men as key decision-makers in the lives of the women, especially during the process of treatment seeking, cannot be emphasised enough The support provided or withdrawn by men can affect women in positive or negative ways and determine their experiences of dealing with distress Hence, involving men in any kind of reproductive health intervention is crucial In addition to men, directly linked to reducing women's psychological burden is the role of social and familial agents This means involving family and community members in providing support systems is equally important

The above are achievable through a consistent process of information dissemination and education of men regarding reproductive and sexual health as also sensitising men towards women's reproductive health problems Additionally focusing on increasing awareness and sensitivity of significant people in the woman's life through community level interventions and outreach activities, would be significant Here the role of the CHV gets further emphasised in providing crucial health information and alternatives

Reducing Risk of Infertility through Adoption of Preventive Measures

Although this research study in no way aims to trace back the origin of infection as the cause of infertility in the women studied, it does reveal certain important concerns which demand preventive level measures to be adopted within hospital and community settings A growing body of research has verified the importance of infection as a cause of female infertility worldwide and traced the link between Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) (including asymptomatic infections), postpartum infections, post abortion infections, pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), and tubal damage (Cates 1985, 1994, WHO 1987, WHO 1995, Westrom 1994)

The study findings indicate how risk of reproductive morbidities is linked to women's social status and role within the household, her vulnerability to sexual coercion, inability to take sexual or reproductive health decisions This means that her male partner's sexual behaviour determines her risk to STIs and involving couples in prevention of infections is crucial [7]

Women in this study underwent a series of investigative, intrusive tests for diagnosis and treatment of infertility However, none of them sought out advanced reproductive technological interventions for the purpose of conception This was primarily because the women researched belonged to low-income groups and often did not have enough money to come to the hospital regularly, leave aside avail of these reproductive aids

We know that in vitro fertilisation and other assisted reproduction techniques have been successfully implemented in the developing countries (Nicholson and Nicholson 1994, Vayena *et al* 2002), although some researchers question whether they will ever be accessible at the local level by couples who need them due to cultural and economic constraints (Inhorn 2003) However, cultural and religious values and beliefs, as well as the health care infrastructure and economic development, influence the level of services provided in any one country In most cases, when assisted reproductive technologies are available, they are provided by the private sector, making infertility services accessible only to the middle and upper classes (Vayena *et al* 2002)

Considering the above facts and the resource context of India, it is the preventive level of intervention that social scientists or those in the medical profession need to address This does not mean that we do not do research in and make reproductive technologies available to a larger group of women, but we need to understand our priorities We need to urgently work with communities and encourage adoption of safe practices (increasing age at marriage, birth spacing, use of condoms to prevent infections, promoting antenatal care and safe delivery – all these cumulatively help prevent conditions which can lead to infertility) rather than concentrate only on or largely on developing sophisticated reproductive technologies

Additionally, we feel that obsession with medical technology would lead to further 'medicalisation' of women's bodies and more and more assault on the 'diseased' body that needs to be 'cured' Instead, our focus as social scientists is to reach beyond and understand why women without children are stigmatised and work at reducing that stigma instead of merely finding solutions for achieving pregnancy

Conclusions

We note through the discussion of key findings that an intertwining of personal and social perceptions about childless women and the related consequences of childlessness are the key catalysts in initiating and guiding treatment Although in most other forms of health-seeking behaviour, women's health is usually the last priority, in case of resolving the 'problem' of infertility, women are rushed to the hospital for treatment

The inability to give their husband and marital family an heir is a crucial 'disruption' in the process of achievement of a high status for women in their households This also results in the inability of the family to be integrated into the larger community The only possible way 'out' of this distressing situation then is accessing treatment, which hopes to give the woman and her family some sense of control over what is happening

Within the arena of the process of treatment seeking where women and her family come into direct contact with an outside party, an 'expert', in fact results in the experience of a loss of control over one's condition, making the woman more vulnerable to physical and mental distress In this study, women accessed different forms of treatment at different points in time depending on the accessibility (not just physical) to that resource We were however able to interact with women only within the set up of a public hospital It was not possible to accompany them to or even discuss in detail about other sources of treatment This was largely due to the taboo and silence associated with non-medical forms of treatment

Within a hospital, it is observed that there is no simple, smooth procedure of diagnosis and treatment that follows the woman's visit to the doctor Several factors aid or decelerate or put a break to or change the course of treatment for women This paper has discussed the complex interaction of personal and family perceptions, community consequences, doctor-woman interaction, women's interaction with other medical staff, women's access to information, nature of treatment and financial resources available to the woman, which play a role in determining the treatment-seeking process and experience for women

Treatment seeking, thus, does not follow a linear process involving recognition of a problem and seeking help Even the recognition of the problem is contingent upon several psycho-socio-cultural factors, that is, besides the biological evidence of a medical condition other aspects of individual (and/or group) appraisal determine the decision to seek treatment These are as illustrated below

- Does the individual perceive the symptoms as being normal or abnormal? How important does the individual consider her/his condition to be? Does it need immediate attention? (Mechanic 1978)
- What the person consciously or unconsciously wants (in this case conception is the expectation)?
- What are the person's and her/his family's response styles?
- What else can be done- alternative strategies that may be employed before consulting a medical professional (try praying, visit local healers)?
- How the illness would affect the individual's interactions and relations with family and others in the community?
- What is the support and perceived control over the situation?
- What are the learned cultural consequences of the condition and coping mechanisms? (Di Matteo 1991)

At different points in time, different factors impinge upon the decision to seek treatment Largely, we know that these decisions are influenced by significant household members, community perceptions, which guide women's sense of self and personal desires to have children, resources available (material, time, personal), support systems the woman can use (parental and marital family, a woman friend who may accompany her to the hospital, the paramedical staff who work at the hospital but belong to the same community) and most importantly the actual interaction within the medical setting with the experts treating the woman and her husband for infertility

Thus, we note that the pathway from discovery of inability to conceive at the time that is desired and the number of times it is desired, diagnosis and subsequent treatment is full of disruptions These disruptions serve to put woman in situations of great distress and disillusionment Seeking treatment, an action that on the face of it seems to be a resolution to the 'problem' at hand, in fact adds to the experience of mental health distress

Notes

This article is an output of a larger MPhil study on *Understanding the Experiences of Childlessness among Low-Income Group Women in Mumbai Slums* (Joshi 2006) The key objectives of the study included understanding (a) the childless women's perceptions of causes and consequences of infertility, (b) their treatment-seeking behaviour, (c) the role of men in sharing this experience, and (d) the coping strategies The author wishes to thank the anonymous referee for her/his valuable comments for revision of this paper

1 *Programme of Action* International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, 1994 Para 7 6

2 Any woman who defined herself as 'experiencing childlessness' was considered as a childless woman for the purpose of this research This means that the researcher did not rely on medical definitions, rather sought the voices of women who were going

through a particular personal and social experience This was a conscious choice as the researcher wanted to focus on women's perceptions rather than only on women who were being labelled by the medical world as infertile At this point it is also important to note the use of the term *infertility* as against *childlessness* The researcher's position is as follows Infertility is a term understood and used by the medical world It connotes a biological inability to reproduce The agent performing the act of labelling is the medical professional, who after examination and diagnosis declares the woman unfit to 'naturally' reproduce and suggests medical alternatives Infertility is clearly a medical condition, carrying with it the assumption that women and medical experts have interacted and a diagnosis has been made Childlessness encompasses the gamut of experiences that go hand in hand with the biological inability to conceive The role of the doctor here is not of key importance Childlessness refers to a life without children, which is very different for different women depending on the manner in which the society and culture is labelling them

3 FGDs help understand the intangibles (perceptions, attitudes, opinions, values) as they occur in a group and the process through which these are formed during group interaction Hence, FGDs with other women in the community helped understand community perceptions and attitudes regarding infertility, hence brought to light the larger context within which childless women make decisions or face consequences Methodologically these also helped the researcher frame questions for in-depth enquiry with women and medical staff

4 Interviewing medical and paramedical staff helped gain an understanding of the interface between women health care seekers and health care providers and led to a holistic conceptualisation of treatment seeking by women The medical perspective combined with the personal and social experiences of women helped in adding richness to data

5 'Treatment-seeking' here refers to medical treatment sought at a public hospital where the researcher collected data Information regarding other sources of treatment and related experiences could not be collated due to taboo associated with use of non-medical forms of treatment and unavailability of time to fill this gap in data

6 Although, RTIs are being addressed aggressively, vaginal swabs are regularly taken and pre- and post- test counselling is carried out in case of high-risk groups, there is a huge stigma attached to RTIs In fact, the government has even changed the name of these centres to 'Family Awareness Welfare Centres' to help reduce the burden of the stigma Since recruitment criteria are well established, the staff is well qualified, but invariably there are infrastructural problems Also in the OPD there is overcrowded and lacks privacy Therefore, majority of RTIs cannot be adequately dealt with (in conversation with doctors during data collection)

7 Attempted in Sitapur by CARE by targeting both men and women in the 'natural method of contraception programme' Counselling meetings are regularly held by male and female staff members with men and women in the community on prevention of unwanted pregnancy, antenatal care, preventing STIs and RTIs

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Intergenerational Interests, Uncertainty and Discrimination – II: An Empirical Analysis of the Process of Declining Child Sex Ratios in India

Mattias Larsen, Neelambar Hatti and Pernille Gooch

This article is an empirical analysis of the problem of declining child sex ratios in India The rapid transformation of the social and economic fabric in India is altering the institution of the family, as the young become increasingly disembedded from customary social relations Case studies in Karnataka and Uttaranchal show how this transformation has lead to differing intergenerational interests, thereby increasing parental uncertainty about the future The uncertainty experienced by the older generation concerns apprehensions about future socioeconomic obligations and the younger generation becoming disembedded from those intergenerational interests It is in the face of this uncertainty that the situational context of the social devices transmitted through centuries of gendered prescriptions is fallen back upon and receives renewed importance This context is constituted by highly gendered norms wherein daughter discrimination is legitimised and rationalised

[Keywords daughter discrimination, declining child sex ratios, female foeticide, intergenerational interests, push pull transformation, uncertainty]

Maga manege, Magalu pararige
(A son is for our family, a daughter is for another family)

– A mother from Karnataka

The declining number of females compared to the number of males in the Indian population has been a cause for concern during the past three decades (Visalia 1971, Natarajan 1972, Miller 1981, 1989, Agnihotri,

2000) In 1990, Amartya Sen (1990) brought to attention the growing gender discrimination by analysing the male-female sex ratio The results of the 2001 Census have further intensified the debates on the issue and the main focus has been on the increasing masculinity of child sex ratios Considering that India has undergone significant economic and social changes in the past fifteen years, why are female children still at risk despite marked progress in female literacy and increased participation of women in economic and political life?

This article builds upon the recognition that the declining child sex ratios in India are a result of an ongoing process of societal change Looking at areas which have shown significant declines in child sex ratios between 1991 and 2001, it draws on results from field studies in rural areas of Karnataka in the south and of Uttaranchal in the north Uttaranchal has shown an alarming decline in child sex ratio from 948 (girls below the age of 6 years per 1000 boys of the same age) in 1991 to 906 in 2001 This study focuses on case studies from Siddapur taluk[1] in the Uttara Kannada district of Karnataka, and from Pithoragarh tehsil in the Pithoragarh district of Uttaranchal [2] For both cases, the outstanding feature is a very low child sex ratio Two additional cases with high child sex ratios are used for comparative purposes

The outcome of daughter discrimination is, in fact, not difficult to see quantitatively It is, for example, possible to get a clear picture of the ratio between sexes from *balwadi* and *anganwadi* (kindergarten) registers of the number of girls and boys below six years of age from the locality [3] Likewise, it is possible to trace the inequalities in sex ratios to geographical area, to social groups and to economic groups However, if the intention is to analyse the underlying reasons for this anomaly, it is necessary to shift focus from the outcome, the ratio, to the social process, which results in skewed sex ratios [4]

Empirical evidence used in this article consists of data collected through interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs), and by participant observation This information has been complemented by village-level and taluk-level official data collected during fieldwork

Karnataka

Situated on a tableland where the Western and the Eastern Ghat Ranges converge into the Nilgiri Range, the South Indian state of Karnataka has a population of about 53 million Karnataka is commonly divided into four regions according to their physical characteristics, namely, Coastal, Malnad, Maidan Plains, and Southern Maidan Each region has its own distinct social, economic and cultural characteristics According to the

2001 Census, the total literacy rate for the state is 66 6 per cent Rural literacy is 70 4 per cent for males and 48 per cent for females The overall sex ratio is 965, while the rural sex ratio is slightly higher at 977 The child sex ratio (CSR) has declined from 960 in 1991 to 949 in 2001

Uttara Kannada district and Siddapur taluk are situated in the north-western Malnad region of the state The taluk is characterised by ecological features typical of the Western Ghats The deciduous forests and the elevation give it a relatively mild climate and access to natural irrigation from the many rivers that flow in the valleys The rural literacy rate is 81 6 for males and 63 5 for females The district CSR was 946 in 2001 The distinct physical features of the area have shaped the villages, which tend to be small and scattered It also makes communication difficult Traditionally, majority of the people derived their livelihoods from the cultivation of paddy and areca [5] The areca palm trees are grown in gardens or plantations and are normally situated in the valleys These are mostly intercropped with spices such as cardamom, pepper and, to an increasing extent, with vanilla, coffee and various fruit trees The case study was conducted on the plantation economy side in the border area between plantation and paddy economy

The district is characterised by two types of cultivation and their distinct economies (Joshi 1997) [6] Structural changes have been fundamental in the paddy economy, whereas the plantation economy has remained largely unchanged (Pani 1997, Joshi 1997) The most notable changes came with the Karnataka Land Reforms (Amendment) Act of 1974, an important feature of which was the abolition of tenancy by conferring ownership on the erstwhile tenants (Joshi 1997) This affected the paddy economy with its very high incidence of tenancy and high farm rents In the plantation economy, where tenancy was rare and land rent was low, the agrarian structure has remained relatively intact Today, farm wages for women in this area are the highest in the state while wages for men are the third highest (Government of Karnataka 2004)

Instead of structural change, the plantation area has experienced a transformation from increased availability of education facilities and from the diffusion of 'modern values' through TV Perhaps equally important has been the improvements in transport and communication In other words, the area has become 'modernised' in the sense of access to certain aspects of modern life It is a relatively well-off area as it enjoys fertile soils, natural irrigation and relatively lucrative cash-crop agriculture

Siddapur taluk has one of the lowest child sex ratios in the state According to the 2001 Census, the overall sex ratio in the district is 970

women for every 1000 men and, for the taluk, it is 973 The child sex ratio of the taluk declined from 927 girls for every 1000 boys in 1991 to 896 in 2001 This significant decline has many implications

The availability of diagnostic technologies was made clear in statements like these

> Nowadays doctors don't tell the sex of the child straight away It wasn't banned earlier and then it was no problem finding out Even now, if people ask, and many people ask, they will be told Everybody is aware, people from all classes and castes If you want to find out it is no problem to do it It may cost 500-1000 rupees

The findings of our study suggest that childbearing is closely linked to economic reasoning where too many children are considered a financial burden It is important to remember that such a change in reasoning may not affect the way parents legitimise their son preference, but when such a preference is strong it would indeed have an effect in terms of lower CSR [7] This, in turn, is reflected in comments like 'The ideal family is of one son and one daughter For us it will be difficult in the future since we already have two daughters', or 'Most women themselves prefer to have sons as daughters would be a burden in the future' Differences in agrarian systems appear to influence the child sex ratio Problems of poor rains hit the paddy cultivators harder as they have no reserves, which the comment above clearly illustrates

While Kalahalli[8] had a high child sex ratio (1217), Minnahalli was characterised by a low child sex ratio (868) in 2001 In all respects, Kalahalli is less developed It was quite isolated until very recently and, even today it only has limited communications to other areas Although there have been considerable changes in agriculture after the tenancy reform, making it possible for people to cultivate their own land and subsequently earn more, there is still a big difference in income level when compared with Minnahalli The low level of education is reflected in how the young people of Kalahalli do not look for possibilities outside their village One respondent put it like this 'In our village most people have their fathers' land and they find it sufficient They feel that if they work there it is enough This is the kind of attitude we have here ' Their situation gives very little confidence to try to live a different life and their mobility is considerably lower than the one of young people of Minnahalli The dilemma they face is that they feel 'Even if we go to school we will just fall back into agriculture, so because of that many people don't see the point of going to school ' This situation should be seen in contrast to the one in Minnahalli where the young use the

opportunities and mobility given to them through education and look for different ways to live their lives from that of their parents

The mean age at marriage for women in Kalahalli is 17 5 years and, as one woman explained 'To some extent and in some cases, education is discontinued once the marriage has been fixed ' Nevertheless, this type of attitude seems to be changing, 'Girls have more courage now to question the age at which their parents want them to marry', as explained by the women in one FGD Changes are taking place and women are gradually getting more say about their own life and their mobility is increasing However, there is a long way to go and the villagers constantly return to how they feel backward and subordinate

On the other hand, Minnahalli, with a low CSR, has had greater access to 'modern' aspects of life Not only has fertility gone down with smaller family sizes, there has also been a rise in education level where at least a college degree is the minimum the better off families expect and provide for their children The rise in education has lead to an increased geographical mobility among the young The younger generation also marries considerably later An effect of this development was explained in a male FGD in Minnahalli

> Now there are equal opportunities for boys and girls particularly when it comes to education With regards to education for girls, it is now becoming so that the girls themselves are not ready to marry a boy who lives in a village They want to have a good groom who lives in town and has a good steady income

Both study areas share a son preference expressed in such remarks as 'According to tradition one son and one daughter is the ideal With one daughter we need a son A son is needed for heading the household or for agriculture work With only daughters the land will go to the daughter's husband's side' or 'The ideal family is one son and one daughter The son continues the bloodline and is old-age support The daughter is important to expand the social network ' However, while not one respondent in Minnahalli talked about attaining the preferred gender composition of their families through the traditional way of repeated births until a son is born, this is still the method parents used in Kalahalli This was expressed in statements like 'A son is necessary to take care of us in old age and also to perform ceremonies when we have passed away First we had three daughters and then we finally had a son Now everybody shows more affection to him'

In Minnahalli, this practice has given way to modern methods of determining the gender composition of the family This was illustrated in comments like the one given by a woman

> I needed at least one son He will stay close to me and take care of me I first had one daughter, and then I wanted to have at least one son If the second had been a daughter I would not have gone through with the birth The daughters move out when they marry

Most likely she had undergone a sex-determination test and as indicated by the statement was ready to abort the foetus had it been a girl That foeticide is a widespread practice was expressed in remarks such as 'A doctor from [a nearby town] does the SDTs For a higher price he brings patients to the town He also performs abortions ' Or in statements such as

> If somebody has a boy they don't try to have more children, people will only try to have one more child if the first child is a daughter and only to get a son People want to have male children Therefore, regardless of if it is against the law the female foetus will be aborted

Thus, there has been a shift from son preference to active daughter discrimination made possible by modern technology in Minnahalli However, this is not so in Kalahalli When people reason that – 'With two children I will stop, even if it is two daughters' – it indicates how a similar shift has not taken place there

While both areas have a strong son preference in common, that preference has been increased by the changes brought along by modern 'values', particularly in an increased mobility for the young, in Minnahalli, but not in Kalahalli At the same time, there has been a change toward actively discriminating against girls, whether unborn or born, facilitated by modern techniques This change appears to be what has contributed to the decline in child sex ratio

These two patterns of change could be explained in terms of 'push' and 'pull' factors [9] In Kalahalli, agriculture has undergone such changes through tenancy reforms, what we consider a 'push' factor, that the economic reality for the rice-cultivating families has been altered At the same time, the families continue to use the traditional method of repeated births in order to achieve the desired gender composition On the other hand, in Minnahalli, the increased availability of opportunities outside agriculture, what we would call 'pull', has created strong incentives for investment in education and in individuals This in turn, has meant a diffusion of new values and greater socioeconomic mobility, which has

lead to a shift from the traditional method of achieving desired gender composition towards a method facilitated by modern techniques

Uttaranchal

In 2000, after many years of agitation, the central part of the Indian Himalayas, formerly known as the Uttar Pradesh (UP) Hills, severed its ties with UP and was constituted as Uttaranchal, the 27th state of the Republic of India Women's and environmental movements were an important part of the history leading up to the creation of the new state This illustrates the fact that sustainable use of the environment and better conditions for women are central issues for a majority of the people of the state

Uttaranchal is situated to the northwest of UP, India's most populous state It shares borders with Tibet, Nepal, Himachal Pradesh, and the UP plains districts The state can be divided into three distinct geographical regions the High-mountain region, the Mid-mountain region and the Terai region The economy of the state is predominantly agrarian, and the rural scenario is still dominated by small-scale utilisation of available environmental resources where women (and girls) do most of the work This is complemented by a 'money order economy' due to large-scale migration of younger men to the plains for jobs in the armed forces, the government, or in the private sector

Physical isolation, poor infrastructure, high cost of transportation, absence of market, limited production possibilities, and absence of irrigation facilities are some of the main constraints to rural development in the hills Furthermore, the environmental fragility of the hills sets limits for intensive production systems (Farooquee and Rawat 1997) On the positive side are factors such as diversified activities, specialised and skilled handicraft, and maximum utilisation of available resources The backbone of economic activities in the hills has traditionally been small-scale agricultural ventures depending mainly on local input and production for subsistence rather than for the market This scenario is now changing with, on one hand, commercialisation of agriculture and, on the other, diversification of occupations where agriculture loses its importance to salaried employment outside the village The development in the state appears to affect women – and especially the girl child – negatively While the overall sex ratio in Uttaranchal rose from 936 to 964 between 1991 and 2001 the CSR fell from 948 to 906

For Uttaranchal, comparisons have been made between two areas positioned at opposite ends of the spectrum of high and low child sex ratios respectively At one end, we find Pithoragarh tehsil, which has the

lowest sex ratio in the 0-6 years age group, with an average of 855 girls to 1000 boys [10] Pithoragarh district, which was carved out of Almora district in 1960, stretches from the middle to the high mountains, and it shares a border Nepal to the east and China (Tibet) to the north

Pithoragarh tehsil is situated in the southern part of the district With a rural CSR of 867 and an urban CSR of only 819, it emphasises the general trend found in the 2001 Census that one consequence of economic growth, education, and access to modern medical facilities could be fewer girls in the population compared to boys Pithoragarh tehsil resembles Siddapur taluk in Karnataka in so far as it has a very low child sex ratio With greater exposure to 'modern' lifestyles new values have been inculcated leading to lower fertility and smaller family sizes One reason for this is new opportunities for employment in salaried occupations especially for males Many men from the hills join the army This is particularly so for Pithoragarh, where it is estimated that about half of the households have a male member in the army or an elder man receiving an army pension This influx of cash from outside is contributing to a marginalisation of agriculture

Just as in the case studies from Karnataka, in Pithoragarh too, a preference for sons was expressed during interviews This was articulated in such statements from women as 'We must have at least one boy' or 'We cannot afford more than one daughter due to high marriage expenses' But they also said 'Our in-laws are the biggest problem, they are the ones who want the boys most ' While all those interviewed denied that they themselves used ultrasound in order to abort female foetuses, which is illegal, they all knew that the method existed and said that they were sure that many families in the area made use of it This was not difficult either as the town of Pithoragarh, with all its medical facilities, was within easy reach from the villages of our study

Puraula tehsil in Uttarkashi district, used for comparison, stands at the opposite end of the child sex ratio with an equal number of girls and boys (1000), the highest ratio at the tehsil level in the state The two tehsils also stand in contrast with each other when it comes to female literacy, Pithoragarh at the top with a female literacy rate of 72 5 (male literacy 94 5) and Puraula at the bottom with 38 5, only about half of that of male literacy which is 73 7 This suggests that development in the form of education and shortening of the gender gap in literacy does not automatically lead to more equal conditions for women and girls in terms of sex ratios (see Jha *et al* 2006) Uttarkashi is situated in the western part of Uttaranchal, bordering Himachal Pradesh to the west and China (Tibet) to the north Puraula tehsil, which is exclusively rural, constitutes the north-western part of the district This tehsil has a more 'traditional'

lifestyle together with continued dependence on agricultural production based on female labour both for subsistence and for the market as well as a higher fertility and bigger families Mori block, from which the case study used here is fetched, is the most remote part of the tehsil and considered one of the most marginalised parts of Uttaranchal Here people report that dowry is a new phenomenon, having evolved only during the last decade Earlier the groom's family had to give money to the bride's family In FGDs women said that a girl who was badly treated in her in-laws' house could return to her native home and her parents would remarry her somewhere else However, they also said that this practice was declining, as somebody 'who was educated would surely not marry such a girl'

In this remote part of the state new opportunities for salaried employment are few Young men do migrate to jobs in the plains, but these are mainly low paid menial jobs Their sisters also might take jobs as maids in towns Change is here expressed as an increasing dependence on market powers within agriculture, in other words, a 'push' transformation Crops produced for the markets in the plains are replacing traditional crops produced to sustain the household, but it is still women doing most of the farm work

Just as in Karnataka, our observation from Uttaranchal also indicates that differences in agrarian production appear to influence the child sex ratio In both case studies from Uttaranchal we have agricultural systems dominated by household female labour [11] The difference between the two is that, in Puraula, farming is still essential for the economic survival of the household, while in Pithoragarh, its importance is declining, being substituted by salaried employment for men Thus, Puraula is characterised by a 'push' transformation, while Pithoragarh exhibits a 'pull' transformation The fact that women's contribution to the household is no longer considered important was bluntly expressed by a male respondent from a rural household with two sons and no daughters 'We cannot afford girls because their contribution is not important ' Growth in new job opportunities for men and the increasing remittances of money from outside also seem to have inflated demands for dowry,[12] resulting in very high costs for marrying off daughters New values as regards family size and the rise in marriage expenses result in smaller families and a decline in the number of female children Thus, the economies of Pithoragarh and Puraula are undergoing structural changes with different gendered outcomes

Table 1 Comparison of Case Study Areas

	Karnataka		Uttaranchal	
Cultivation	Paddy + Areca		Paddy + Orchard	
	Kalahalli	Minnahalli	Puraula	Pithoragarh
Child Sex Ratio*	1217	868	1000	867
Mobility	Low	High	Low	High
Education	Low	High	Low	High
Transformation	'Push'	'Pull'	'Push'	'Pull'
	Structural change – tenancy reform	Transformed through increased access	Commercial-isation of agriculture	Diversification of occupations

Source *Census of India, 2001

Differences in Child Sex Ratios and Transformation

Our case studies illustrate the linkages between 'pull' transformation, the disembedding of the young whom it entails and low child sex ratios The areas with high CSR in Karnataka and in Uttaranchal are relatively isolated where the level of education is lower In these areas there has been a transformation of agricultural economic conditions In Karnataka, a combination of population pressure and land reform has changed the agrarian structure and the conditions for agricultural production, while in Uttaranchal it has been a change from subsistence cultivation to cultivation for the market

In the areas where the child sex ratios are low and the education level relatively high, this has not been the case Instead, the low CSR areas have experienced changes in economy from a diversification of occupations with increased possibilities for employment outside agriculture Here, people are convinced that there are gains to be made, at least in economic terms, by educating the younger generation and investing in individuals This change has lead to a process where the young are becoming increasingly disembedded from customary social relations and a gradual transformation of intergenerational relationships is taking place

Our case studies illustrate how 'push' transformation first changes the economic and then the social conditions, as in the form of commercialisation of agriculture with changing crop patterns or from land reforms When structural change occurs through 'push' factors, where the economic changes are mainly related to livelihood insecurity and associated with downward economic mobility as in our high CSR cases,

it appears to lead to a more penetrating and broad institutional change As 'push' factors emerge from necessary changes in livelihoods, be they government induced in the form of land reforms or as necessary reactions to climatic and economic changes in the form of different agricultural strategies with different crops, they affect the economic basis of the whole family regardless of generation

On the other hand, in the study areas with low CSR in both Uttaranchal and Karnataka, change has been induced through what can be described as 'pull' factors The increased access to certain aspects of modern life, such as possibilities for higher education, has meant employment opportunities outside agriculture, for example, in the expanding private and service sector 'Pull' transformation is thus foremost characterised by an existence of a market situation where a valuation of human capital is developing This is paralleled by how education has become important for economic reasons as people are convinced that it gives economic benefits However, no one is certain of these gains Where downward economic mobility signifies 'push' transformation, possibilities of a positive and upward economic mobility characterises 'pull' transformation

When 'pull' factors such as wider economic opportunities and modern communication cause young people to migrate, it affects individual family members first and changes the family through those individuals Individual incomes give rise to income differentials within the family Perhaps the most well substantiated consequence of this change is a decline in the extent to which family elders can influence and control younger family members, a central aspect of an extended family system (Goode 1963, Thornton and Fricke 1987, Mason 1992) This is also an important contributing factor in the subsequent division of joint families into nuclear families An essential part of the disembedding process of India is the 'nuclearisation' of the Indian family, signifying a movement away from the traditional joint household towards a nuclear household situated in an extended family system

Individual incomes pose a challenge to the existing criteria on which the allocation of resources is based A direct result of 'pull' transformation thus appears to be that norms guiding allocation of resources within the household change from being tacit to becoming directly confrontational When younger family members start earning individual incomes, these tacit criteria of intra-household resource allocation are confronted and the existing consensus comes to be questioned, whether intentionally or not This also offers an explanation as to how 'pull' transformation and individual incomes produce uncertainty The change it provokes, from tacit to explicit norms, introduces new contingencies in the relationships

between family members In other words, the changes are induced through the younger generation, causing tension between generations as the young are disembedded from traditional forms of social relationships and the older generation is only indirectly, albeit profoundly, affected by these changes Work and family become separated and a growing number of relationships become contract based It is in such a context that uncertainty comes to characterise the decision-making regarding inter-generational interests The central point is thus that 'pull' transformation leads to a disembedding of the young

Disembedding, Uncertainty, and Falling Back on Social Devices

The disembedding process the young in the low CSR areas are experiencing, and the effects it has on the intergenerational interests, is strongly illustrated by the countless statements parents in those case study areas give However, a central factor standing out in the pull-transformation areas is how parents give two distinctly different kinds of statements regarding reasons for son preference The most common statements reflect some of the most well-documented reasons such as 'A son will give us old-age support and carry the family line further, raising daughters is a greater responsibility and also a daughter will move out after marriage', or 'Without a son it is like a family being without electricity There is no light in the family ' Or perhaps more differentiated as one woman explained it 'For a family, one boy and one girl is the ideal It is a blessing A daughter is important for social networking and a son for carrying the family lineage further The son is essential to perform all after death rituals Without a son there is no salvation' Entwined with this cultural reasoning are economic reasons 'According to tradition one son and one daughter is the ideal If we have a daughter we need a son A son is needed for heading the household and for doing agriculture work With only daughters the land will go to the daughter's husband's side '

On the other hand, there are many statements given in the same conversations as exceptions to the already mentioned conventional reasoning They are, therefore, often along lines like these, this time more specifically concerning old-age support, 'Sons are not as emotionally close to their parents as their daughters Daughters will stay close Daughters are more affectionate I am more confident about daughters, their behaviour and conduct', or 'Generally, sons may take care of us, otherwise daughters will do it ' Another respondent said that

> My father now realises that even though he gave preference to his son to study, who has not done it properly, it is his youngest daughter who has studied till 10th standard and who with her own effort has become a policewoman She now takes care of the whole family

Parents talk specifically about concerns over sons' future interests and behaviour, but they also recognise the influence on this process that the changing attitude in girls and young women has and how this is related to the higher level of awareness through education that they now have This is illustrated in statements like

> Well-educated sons want to move out of agriculture Educated girls don't have the same opportunities Even if they want to it depends upon how far away the job is Nowadays, it even happens that girls will ask if boys live with their parents or not, since they prefer to live alone with their husbands It is the time for women now At least nowadays girls are asked if they want to marry the boy chosen for them or not

Equally common are hints of uncertainties regarding the future and the way in which the young are likely to behave This sense of uncertainty is illustrated by such statements as

> To control a daughter's conduct is difficult Before marriage she should not have contact with men Sexual contact is completely forbidden If she fails to control her conduct there will be big difficulties for her as well as for the whole family But for sons there are no such restrictions It is like having an iron ball in one hand and a banana in the other If I drop the iron ball there is no harm to it, but if I drop the banana it is spoiled and cannot be used

In the context of rapid economic and concurrent social changes, the parents today have to endow their children, including daughters, with education so that they can successfully compete in the job or marriage market However, this means that they are likely to develop contacts of a nature not looked upon favourably by the parents and the community at large The inherent tension experienced by the parents is reflected in such statements as the one above In fact, such statements can be interpreted as descriptions of a disembedding process in which the daughters' increased autonomy is construed by parents and the community to be negatively related to the family's social status The social status of the family is a means through which its members function not only within the community but also in society at large

There are obvious contradictions between these statements Indeed, these contradictions show that the first group of statements is an example

of conventions and depicts social norms for son preference Even more interesting are the accounts that exemplify breaks with convention and, instead, directly describe the disembedding process which the young are experiencing ¸This means that parents, on the one hand, give conventional statements, which reflect all the well-documented reasons for son-preference, but on the other hand, also give unconventional statements reflecting the actual prevailing situation

The contradiction between the conventional and the unconventional statements illustrates not only the uncertainty characterising the conditions under which parents are obligated to make decisions, but also the relationship between that uncertainty and the social devices on which parents' fall back, that is, the conventional attitudes which legitimise and enable parents to rationalise their son preference [13] It is the break with those conventions itself that, from an intergenerational perspective, generates uncertainty The conventional statements thus exemplify a legitimisation and rationalisation of parents' active son preference and as such what parents fall back on The unconventional statements illustrate what generates uncertainty, and the contradiction itself illustrates the actual falling back A near perfect example of the contradictory situation parents experience is reflected in this statement 'According to tradition and customs sons will be expected to stay close, but in the future we don't know Society is changing and through the influence of society sons want to live alone '

The disembedding, thus, has two sides it entails changes for the individual in the form of greater possibilities and capabilities However, those possibilities also challenge the cooperative frame of the family through the challenges to the existing criteria of resource allocation within the household For young women these new possibilities are still relatively restricted but at least they are now able to make demands on what kind of husband they want [14] This highlights how the intergenerational interests are still intact in their structuring function but strained, partly by the increased autonomy of unmarried daughters but also by the greater social and economic mobility foremost for sons [15] It implies how the increased autonomy of the young generation, and the disembedding attached with it, involves uncertainty in the context of intergenerational interests Indeed, it is these intertwined interests that make structuring norms and avoiding uncertainties important

We have seen how the disembedding of the young changes the institution of the family in gendered terms It has changed from being a coercive institution to being a persuasive institution when it comes to sons but not with regard to daughters This is experienced by the family as directly related to its status within the community The disembedding

which generates uncertainty is thus only indirectly gendered as it in most cases appears to be sons who are the agents of the process This is more evident in the case studies in Uttaranchal than in Karnataka At first, this may appear contradictory in relation to daughter discrimination However, though the disembedding process is not directly gendered, the response indeed is highly gendered The social devices resorted to by the parents (and grand parents) provide guidance to decision-making in the form of conventions that constitute a legitimisation of son preference, and this is manifested as a rationalisation of active daughter discrimination This rationalisation is, in our minds, manifested in the decision to resort to aborting female foetuses, thereby reducing the element of uncertainty The disembedding of the young, particularly the emancipation of sons from their fathers and their earlier separation from the paternal household, but also the emancipation of young women through greater access to education and awareness, robs the older women of their power and respectability as mothers-in-law (Kandiyoti 1988) This suggests an explanation to the falling back as a reaction to the uncertainty it creates through consideration of the 'life cycle element' (Caldwell 1978 563) [16] Thus, the outcome is highly gendered and the result is an intensified gender inequality illustrated by extremely low CSR

The difference between high and low CSR areas is thus not only in the level and form of transformation, but, and more importantly, in the uncertainty caused by it It is against the background of this uncertainty that parents are compelled to fulfil their obligations as regards the future of their children The parents find their way of facing this uncertainty by falling back on traditional conventions regarding domestic roles, the understanding of which is adjusted to the current situation This contradicts the younger generation's understanding of those same roles The anticipated increase in the autonomy of the younger generation of women comes to be perceived as a threat to the future of the older generation

The younger generation's needs are in many respects contrary to the traditional values that their parents still try to uphold Increasing access to various aspects of 'modern' life has imputed new values in the form of lower fertility and smaller family sizes, higher education and mobility and higher mean ages at marriage These factors have been the main components in the process of ongoing social change in India and have contributed to the declining trend in CSR (see Caldwell *et al* 1982, Hatti and Ohlsson 1984, 1985, Rele and Alam 1993) They have played an important role in the low CSR study areas but are yet to make their way into the social fabric of the study areas with high CSR Indeed, this finding substantiates that increase in socioeconomic development and

welfare contributes to continuing, and often more pronounced, son preference (see Das Gupta 1987, Clark 2000) Not only has it become more costly to raise children as education has become more important (Caldwell 1982, Croll 2000), but parents now feel vulnerable to the increased mobility and autonomy of their children (Croll 2000) This development introduces uncertainty into the decision-making concerning intergenerational interests, in reaction to which parents fall back on conventional legitimisations of son preference thereby rationalising the active discrimination of daughters

Conclusion

We have seen how 'pull' transformation leads to a disembedding of the young from conventional or traditional forms of social relations This appears to lead to an introduction of new contingencies in the relationships between generations, as expressed by respondents' concerns about the future Our case studies show how 'pull' transformation has lead to a greater gap between generations, thus increasing uncertainty for parents Unfortunately, the uncertainty introduced through 'pull' transformation appears to result in even less flexibility in the translation of norms into allocation The allocation of resources within the household constitutes one of the main factors which give legitimacy to son preference and daughter discrimination

The context of change in terms of intergenerational interests is central to understanding this uncertainty The uncertainty experienced by the parents concerns partly apprehensions about future social obligations such as arranging marriages and partly the young gradually becoming disembedded from those intergenerational interests These concerns are demonstrated in the contradictory statements respondents have given It is also the contradiction in statements that provide crucial clues for understanding how parents respond to the uncertainty which the disembedding of the young produces This is achieved by falling back to conventional arguments for son preference Falling back also offers an alternative to uncertainty and a basis for making decisions concerning the interests of the family, which are intergenerationally tied through the socio-cultural obligations of parenthood

While 'push' transformations change the material conditions of the household in a way that influences all family members, pull-modernisation leaves existing power structures intact only to be challenged by the young generation When uncertainties through 'pull' transformation result in a falling back on social devices, and hence to a limiting of the cooperative space, girls' life chances are affected negatively Uncertainty

becomes particularly detrimental for the situation of women and girls in the family as its intertwined interests of different family members impinge on the cooperative space It is in this situation – this 'parental dilemma' – of decision-making concerning intergenerational interests that the interests of women and girls are excluded, and daughters lose out

Falling back offers a situational structure for decision-making, which concurs with the obligations towards intergenerational interests It is in terms of this situational structure that optimising intergenerational interests leads to active daughter discrimination, something for which the necessary technological infrastructure is readily available The obligated intentionality influencing parents to fall back on conventions and social devices is understandable from a perspective where considerations of intergenerational interest condition preferences and decision-making It adds a context to the already prescribed intentionality in which it finds its rationality It is in the face of uncertainty resulting from the disembedding of the young that the situational context of social devices brought down through centuries of gendered cultural prescriptions is fallen back upon and receives its renewed importance Unfortunately, this context is constituted by highly gendered norms Nevertheless, it is in this context of intergenerational interests, changing economic conditions and social prerequisites, that the nature of the institutional change can be analysed and the process of declining child sex ratios in India conceptualised While the changing social and economic scenario offers potential for a better future it also implies uncertainties and inherent tensions regarding the future for the parents From a conceptualisation which contextualises the problem of declining child sex ratios in the overall process of societal change India is experiencing, we can both understand and explain the dynamic context in which daughter discrimination is legitimised and rationalised

We began our study with the stated intention of conceptualising India's growing daughter discrimination and of explaining the declining child sex ratios in dynamic terms as inherently related to the transformation India is experiencing (see Larsen and Hatti 2008) The tragic rationality of female foeticide is best understood in the light of the rapidly changing social and economic context

Notes

This is the second of the two articles on the subject The first one focussed on theoretical issues (see *Sociological Bulletin*, 57 [1], 2008 82-96)

1 Taluk and tehsil are different terms used in different regions for the major revenue, administrative and planning unit within a district
2 We assume that some basic cultural differences between northern and southern India are reflected in demographic behaviour (see Dyson and Moore 1983), which is why a north-south comparison is of interest
3 Locality can mean a large village or a cluster of a few small villages served either by a *balwadi* or *anganwadi*
4 The factors behind the dynamic are highly relative in nature and to a large degree the outcome of the subjective interpretations made by the actors involved Thus, the decision-making process, which leads to discrimination of girls, has to be understood in terms of the social context That social context is conditioned by relationships of power between its actors, the norms under which they act and the social structure to which they contribute and act within, all of which is of a qualitative nature
5 The areca nut, or betel nut, is the main ingredient in the stimulant *paan*, popular in South Asia and parts of Southeast Asia
6 G S F Collins divided the area of study into two distinct tracts a *rice tract* covering an area of 83 7 sq miles, with 45 villages and a population density of 155 per sq mile, and a *garden/plantation tract* of 248 2 sq miles, with as many as 157 villages and a density of population of only 77 per sq mile (cited in Joshi 1997)
7 This corresponds to what Das Gupta and Bhat (1997) term 'intensification effect'
8 For reasons of discretion, we have chosen to use fictitious names for the villages studied
9 'Push transformation' is a change where uncertainty is exogenous to the institution of the family, whereas the crucial difference to 'pull transformation' is that it also entails an introduction of uncertainty within the family organisation itself, because it consists of a change in the 'mode of production'
10 Laxar tehsil in Haridwar district also has a CSR of 855, but as Laxar is situated in the plains, we have chosen Pithoragarh in order to compare two tehsils both situated in the hills
11 The general situation is that north India is characterised by low female agricultural labour participation, and south India is characterised by high female agricultural labour participation (see Harris-White 2001) This is reversed in our cases In the study areas in Karnataka, participation of women in agricultural work is less intensive than in the study areas from Uttaranchal, where women are the backbone of agriculture
12 Dowry is a considerable burden for the bride's family In the era of globalisation and increasing consumerism, payment of dowry has become more a rule than an exception In many families, even after payments of dowry, there is a continuing unidirectional flow of resources from a woman's parental household to her in-laws' for specific annual festivals and life-passage rituals (see Sekher and Hatti 2007)
13 To clarify, these are traditional norms, which have been handed down through generations However, these are interpreted through a modern-day lens This means that what is fallen back upon are 'refined' versions of those same norms It should, therefore, be noted that the notion of 'falling back' does not depict a complete reactionary return to earlier day norms The same normative framework of the past is not the result of the 'falling back'
14 The preferences expressed during fieldwork were most often for a husband with an employment living in an urban setting
15 In fact, the parents themselves often encourage their children in this regard
16 Often it is the mother-in-law who applies the greatest pressure on her son and the young daughter-in-law to actively discriminate against daughters and produce a son,

since she herself gone had through this process in her younger days when she was expected to produce sons The younger daughters-in-law are expected to bear the same burden that the mothers-in-law had to bear If one manages to tolerate a presently oppressive situation it can yield rewards later as sons becomes fathers and daughters-in-law become mothers-in-law In other words, they have a vested interest in avoiding a daughter's birth because the stigma of not bearing a son is indeed a everyday reality (see Larsen and Hatti 2008, see also Patel 2007)

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Prison Inmate Awareness of HIV and AIDS in Durban, South Africa

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This paper is based on research that aimed to record the voices and ascertain the knowledge that prison inmates have of the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and to identify the predictors of HIV and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) related risk behaviour during incarceration The relationship between sexual behaviour, disease transmission, sexual violence and correctional operations issues was explored Data was utilised from questionnaires and focus group discussions with male inmates at the Westville Medium B in Durban, South Africa The results have indicated that inmates have a superficial understanding of the HIV virus, that the prevalence of HIV/AIDS is high and that the tempo within the penal institution is conducive to the proliferation of the virus

[Keywords disease, HIV/AIDS, prison, sexual violence, South Africa]

Introduction

This paper is based on research in one of the sections of the Westville Prison in Durban, namely, Westville Medium B (WMB) This penal institution is situated on the outskirts of Central Durban and has approximately 12,000 inmates, including sections for males, females and juveniles It is made up of five centres, referred to as Medium, spanning from A to E Medium A accommodates inmates awaiting trial, Medium B, male maximum security inmates, Medium C, inmates with short-term sentences, Medium D, youth offenders, and Medium E, female inmates Each centre has a medical facility available to it, but only one has beds that serve as a quasi internally based hospital, namely, WMB

The purpose of this article is threefold It is to highlight some of the international and South African concerns about prison life and the prevalence of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) It addresses the nexus that interconnects prison conditions, sexual behaviour, disease transmission, sexual violence and the prison inmate's voices on these issues, especially with respect to healthcare, and the transmission of diseases These issues are discussed against the background of the alarming HIV/AIDS statistics that are prevalent in the world today, but with specific reference to South Africa

In order to comprehend the magnitude of the problem of overcrowding in penal institutions, it is important, firstly, to have an appreciation of the number of prisoners that are incarcerated worldwide The World Prison Population List shows that over nine million people are held in penal institutions throughout the world (Walmsley 2005 1) Against the background of an approximately 6 5 billion global population, the world prison population rate should read at approximately 150 per 100,000 people

In December 2005, there were 40 3 million people living with HIV/AIDS around the world There were 4 9 million new cases of HIV in 2005 AIDS death amounted to 3 1 million for that year, with 2 6 million being adults and 570,000 children under 15 years of age (UNAIDS 2005 1) South Africa is presently experiencing one of the most severe HIV epidemics in the world At the end of 2005, there were 5 5 million people living with HIV in South Africa, with almost 1,000 AIDS-related deaths occurring every day (UNAIDS 2006 502)

Against the backdrop of a phenomenal rise in crime, the Judicial Inspectorate of Prisons and the Department of Correctional Services reports, the South African prison population has escalated between 1996 and 2006, largely due to the public outcry for longer and harsher punishment for offenders This has resulted in severe overcrowding of prisons The overcrowded conditions in prison could result in the proliferation of HIV/AIDS Prisons in South Africa have become a breeding ground for HIV/AIDS and other types of infections such as tuberculosis and diseases spread through intravenous drug use, and prisoners now represent one of the most severely affected segments of the population plagued by the disease (Marquez 2002 1) Due to the spread of HIV/AIDS throughout society, this spread is also on the increase among inmates of prisons throughout South Africa

In a survey done during March 2004, a total of 187,640 prisoners in South African prisons were recorded However, South African prison capacity then was 114,787, resulting in an overpopulation of 72,853

inmates (Department of Correctional Services 2004) By March 2006, the number of prisoners decreased to 160,213, still amounting to an overpopulation of 45,708 In February 2006, there were 4,251 inmates in WMB the largest maximum-security prison in Durban, one of South Africa's prime metropolitan areas that is situated on the east coast However, the capacity of this prison is 1,766 inmates – resulting in an over admission of 2,485 (240 71per cent) Each cell meant to accommodate twenty prisoners held approximately fifty to sixty inmates

Although South Africa is alleged to have one of the highest rates of HIV/AIDS cases in the world and its prisons are alleged to have a rate of infection that is higher than the rate in its civilian population, very few attempts have been. made to conduct research among prisoners with regards to this While the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in prison is often quoted in the media and debated in seminars and conferences on HIV/AIDS, access to prisoners by researchers is still constricted by inhibitive legislation Easier access for authentic policy makers and researchers can help to understand the depth and magnitude of the problem in prison Knowledge, perception and attitudes related to HIV/AIDS are important precursors for behavioural responses to the disease

Justification for the Study

South African prisons are renowned for high-risk activities, such as the use of drugs, sexual activities between men, tattooing and other 'blood brotherhood' style activities Some indulge in these activities to combat boredom, while others are forced to engage in them, in a coercive play for power or monetary gain Risky lifestyles can lead to the transmission of diseases from prisoner to prisoner, and pose a serious health risk due to contamination (Reyes 2001 2) Unprotected sexual acts with exchanges of potentially contaminated human secretions pose a real risk

Social and medical conditions within prisons systems in South Africa have been increasingly brought under the media spotlight since 1994, yet there is a lacuna in empirical data that reliably discourses and debates life-threatening diseases such as tuberculosis (TB), pneumonia and HIV/AIDS in prisons In the recent past, several researchers have approached the issue of AIDS in South Africa as well as of prisoners in South African prisons (see Singh 2007 73) For instance, A Whiteside and T Barnett (2003), as medical practitioners, draw attention to the social and economic impact of HIV/AIDS and ominously warn us of the dire consequences of this global epidemic if we do not respond to it with the attention it demands In the course of their work they allege that

'Politicians, policy-makers, community leaders and academics have all denied what was patently obvious – that the epidemic of HIV/AIDS would not affect only the health of individuals but also the welfare and wellbeing of households, communities and, in the end, entire societies' (*ibid* 5)

Sex between men has been recorded in almost every human society and at every stage in history At some times and in some places it is accepted, more often than not, it is repressed or even denied In many parts of the world, men who have sex with men are frequently the targets of prejudice, discrimination, and even legal sanction This social stigma has prevented many men from admitting that they are at risk of contracting HIV from sex with other men and has prevented the development of HIV prevention campaigns directed at those men at risk Anal intercourse is often a component of sex between men Due to the increased friction and the fragile tissues in the anus, anal intercourse involves a higher risk of HIV transmission than vaginal intercourse, particularly for the receptive partner (World AIDS Campaign 2000 6-7)

Millions of men worldwide are in jail at rates far higher than women Here, sex takes place between prisoners and between prisoners and guards, or may occur in degrading conditions with the men's female partners or with sex workers Some of this is coerced sex or rape, and most of it is unprotected Studies from Australia, Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica, Nigeria, the United Kingdom and Zambia show that a considerable number of men in prison have sex with other men Many prisoners, incarcerated for drug-related offences, continue to take and even inject drugs while in prison As a result of both sexual and drug-related transmission, there are often high rates of HIV among prisoners In France, inmates are 10 times more likely to be HIV-positive than the general population, while AIDS is responsible for half of all deaths in prisons in Brazil (*ibid* 10)

The scale of sexual activity in prisons is complex to establish because studies must rely on prisoners self-reporting Sex in prison often takes place in situations of violence or intimidation, therefore, both perpetrators and victims are reluctant to discuss its occurrence Sexual activities occur through homosexual interaction – creating an unrelenting social stigma to it and often forcing avoidance of complaining to the authorities C Giffard (1999 36) points out that, in a Lawyers' for Human Rights survey, it was estimated that 65 per cent of inmates in South African prisons participate in homosexual activity

In addition to the already infected HIV positive prisoners, it has become a normative expectation that a significant number of potential convicts will also contract HIV while being temporarily incarcerated

Rape and homosexual intercourse is part of a larger social stratification phenomenon in prison, the ranking of prisoners into a hierarchy that is determined by brute strength and fighting prowess The incidence of forced, coerced, and consensual sodomy is a reality of prison life, and is considerably increased by overcrowding and gang activity (Institute for Security Studies 2001 5) This type of sexual interaction carries the highest risk of HIV infection, particularly in cases of rape Forced anal intercourse is more likely to result in rectal tearing, which increases the likelihood of HIV transmission because the virus has a greater probability of entering the bloodstream HIV transmission is compounded by the presence of untreated sexually transmitted infections (STIs) Some STIs, such as herpes and syphilis, result in genital sores Breaks in the skin in the genital region increase the likelihood of HIV transmission The prisoner population has a higher incidence of STIs and prisoners are often not given their constitutional right of access to proper treatment As a result, prisoners are more likely to have untreated STIs than the general population and are also at greater risk for transmitting and contracting HIV, within and outside of prison (*ibid*) Against this background there is an urgent need for more studies on prison life and the problems of sexually transmitted diseases

Research Methods

Fieldwork for this paper began after the arduous task of completing a PhD in 2004 on overcrowding and related problems in South African prisons Post-PhD research continued through interviews in one of Durban's major prisons, namely, WMB prison One of the major factors that recurred in the literature survey and interviews with people from across a range of backgrounds was the alleged prevalence of HIV/AIDS in prisons The regularity of this issue urged me towards wanting to understand this phenomenon in greater depth (Singh 2007 73) Attempts to acquire more detailed information on it were hardly revealing or useful The Annual Report of the Judicial Inspectorate of Prisons (JIP) (2005/2006) lists deaths in prisons under two categories all HIV/AIDS related deaths and those where a prisoner died because of illness under 'Natural Deaths' 'Unnatural Deaths', on the other hand, included 'assault, murder, suicides, accidents or similar events' (Annual Report of the Judicial Inspectorate of Prisons 2005/2006 34)

This approach is symptomatic of the state's policy of denialism towards the general prevalence of HIV/AIDS in South Africa Interviews with senior officials of the South African prison services in Pretoria and Cape Town, with officials in the prison that was researched, with an

NGO that did work with prisoners and with prisoners themselves began in May 2005

The data for this article was derived through two methods firstly, in February 2006, a questionnaire was administered to a sample of fifty inmates at the WMB prison The fifty comprised of five English-speaking and forty-five isiZulu-speaking male inmates Several of the fifty inmates who were part of the target group were also part of AIDS Control Committee The research was administered in the prison church hall Participation in the research was voluntary and this was communicated to the inmates prior to the interviews Prisoners were required to sign a consent form to participate in the research Secondly, observations, interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with prisoners on several occasions after arrangements were made with the prison officials Semi-structured questions were used and the data captured in the form of transcribed taped interviews and extensive field notes The medium of communication was in English and this was translated to the inmates in isiZulu In order to validate the responses generated by the questionnaire, five FGDs (groups of ten) were conducted with the inmates This was conducted in a small, windowless room (approximately 4 x 4 meters) which was adjacent to the prison church hall Open-ended questions were asked by the researcher in order to ascertain the various problems experienced by inmates within the prison

Inmates were asked six questions covering the following aspects which were thought to be significant to them as prisoners

(i) understanding of the term 'HIV/AIDS',
(ii) awareness of their HIV status,
(iii) knowledge of the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in WMB,
(iv) estimation of it in terms of it being low, high or non-existent,
(v) awareness of anyone contracting HIV/AIDS after being admitted to prison, and
(vi) fear of contracting HIV/AIDS in prison

In May 2007, interviews were conducted with prison hospital officials at the WMB through the case study method The use of the case-study method often serves as an important instrument in acquiring data For instance, Somekh and Lewin (2005 33) rightfully assert that individual case studies reflect upon how individuals respond to wider societal expectations and pressures Their statement is not only a widely accepted norm in social science research, but it also constitutes a challenge to the ways in which such assertions can be used in specific types of research, such as in criminology

In one of the interviews I learnt that, in 2002, the South African Government conducted a bilateral talk with the Ugandan Prison Service Several trained officials from Uganda were especially brought down to share their knowledge and experiences with officials and inmates alike However the evidence from the fieldwork provides an interesting outlook to what was acquired from the Ugandan learning experiences

The Survey

From the fifty questionnaires that were administered, forty-seven completed questionnaires were returned Twenty-four inmates were aged 21 to 30 years It is within this age group that the prevalence of HIV/AIDS is the highest in South Africa There were eighteen inmates in the age group of 31-40 years, one inmate in the age group of 41-50 years and four inmates were over 50 years of age Two inmates' home language was English and that of the remaining forty-five was isiZulu The medium of the questionnaires and the FGDs was English One of the inmates, who was fluent in both isiZulu and English acted as the interpreter

It was ascertained from the survey group that forty-four inmates were single and three were married Ten had no formal education, four had primary education, twenty-five had secondary education and six, tertiary education All the prisoners who participated in this research were incarcerated for long terms due to the severity of their crimes (murder, rape, hijacking and robbery) The following results are reported in the format of the questionnaire and will be supported, where applicable, by answers from the FGDs The outcome of the focus group going beyond the questions in the questionnaire are reported and discussed at the end of these results In what follows, the inmates direct verbal responses are presented in italics, so that their voices and perspectives cab be 'heard'

The Questions and Responses

1. What do you understand by the term HIV/AIDS?

Thirty-four per cent of the respondents understood that the term HIV/ AIDS referred to a virus Thirty-two per cent understood it to be a dangerous killer disease, 14 per cent said that it kills, and 20 per cent did not understand the term Although the respondents had undergone training with the Aids Control Committee within WMB, only some inmates understood that the HIV/AIDS virus is a sexually transmitted

disease about which people must be careful and they must use a condom during sexual intercourse Other inmates had the understanding that *'HIV/AIDS was a germ, that this germ is a killer disease that can kill everyone in this planet and cannot be cured '*

Some understood that there is no cure for HIV/AIDS as yet One comment was *'I learn that HIV/AIDS there is no cure for this sickness but when you get it you are still a human being '* Another inmate said, *'HIV is a virus It cannot be treated (no vaccine) AIDS is a disease, there are 26 opportunistic diseases '* Others stated

- *I understand it is a killer disease that needs to be prevented because there is no cure for it because once you get infected you are on your way to heaven*
- *HIV is a virus causing AIDS you cannot see a person with HIV AIDS is a collection of diseases, person with AIDS is sick.*
- *I understand that HIV/AIDS is a dangerous disease because lot of people lost their loved ones even here in prison we lost our brothers or inmates*
- *I understand that HIV is a killer pandemic disease, and that it kills our families, relatives and fellow inmates within the DCS*
- *HIV/AIDS it a disease that eat the blood cell to the condition were body system cannot prevent or protect itself from variety disease and end up killing you*
- *HIV is a virus AIDS is the disease and is transmitted disease it can affect anyone Here in prison HIV no sign of it but AIDS signs are present*

2. Are you aware of your HIV status? If yes, how did you become aware?

Nearly 58 per cent of the respondents were aware of their HIV status and 42 5 per cent did not know their HIV status Due to the confidentiality surrounding HIV/AIDS respondents were not asked if they were HIV positive The percentage of inmates that were unaware of their HIV status is extremely high Considering that every month in South Africa, approximately 30,000 offenders pass through the justice system (Judicial Inspectorate of Prisons 2004/2005 14), it could mean that, if these inmates were HIV positive, they could, when released, unknowingly infect people in the community

One inmate stated that, although he knew his HIV status, it was important for him to *'learn how HIV/AIDS can be prevented or we must fight against the disease Not only a single person but also even a government must look after it'* Another inmate learnt of his HIV status in 1999, when he was involved in a fight, a prisoner bit him to the extent

that his skin tore He was taken to the prison hospital for treatment and he requested that an HIV test be done Other comments were

- *Yes after doing basic course of HIV/AIDS made me realise it is important to know your HIV status I went to test myself in the hospital*
- *I was aware when I saw some of the prisoners dying in jail*
- *Yes after doing basic course of HIV/AIDS made me realise it is important to know your IIIV status I went to test myself in the hospital*
- *I'm aware of HIV/AIDS I learn and see people dying of this disease*
- *Me am not aware in my status because I never go to check if I'm HIV or not*
- *No, I m not aware about my status because I tested last year on the 10th of February but no results came back That is why I don't know my status*
- *I know about my status and I make a blood test more than three times By that time I was afraid after I learn about HIV/AIDS I never have a problem about my status*
- *No because I will never get tested as I'm still here in prison because of poor relationship between prisoners and hospital staff*

3. What is your knowledge of the existence of HIV/AIDS at the Westville Prison?

Seventy-six per cent of the respondents revealed that the existence of HIV/AIDS was high and that many inmates were dying from this disease The remaining 24 per cent did not indicate whether the disease did exist at the prison, but their response was that HIV/AIDS was a life-threatening disease They were aware of the high mortality rate due to HIV/AIDS and knew that their fellow inmates and friends were dying of AIDS The death rate in prison has escalated from 1 65 deaths per 1,000 prisoners in 1995 to its current level of 9 2 deaths per 1,000 prisoners per annum (Judicial Inspectorate of Prisons 2005/ 2006 34) Those who were infected found it extremely difficult to get the correct care and treatment One response was

> *HIV/AIDS is at a great existence at Westville prison Inmates that are infected find it hard Bad food, bad shelter, bad medication, bad assistance from members Get left for dead Shortage of correctional services members, anal sex and oral sex is high*

Another comment was

> *Brothers are losing their lives through a lack of knowledge I know that this disease happens at Westville Prison because of anal sex HIV/AIDS is*

killing lot of inmates here Some of the inmates are scared to come out and confirm at all We are even afraid to get tested, that's why they die because they know about their status when they are already ill

Furthermore,

People have it from outside and come with it in the prison and some people they have it in jail because of many conditions they face in the prison There are a high number of inmates who are HIV positive and have AIDS They are dying everyday and there is no access to the medical parole

These findings were confirmed by the discussions held with the focus group

There are prisoners/ inmates who are dying in front of us and we learn that they are dying of HIV/AIDS So that's why we are saying people are dying of HIV/AIDS' 'You can get AIDS through sexual penetration, through carelessness or maybe if I have a cut and I don't take care of that thing, and maybe someone who got the same kind cut somewhere he got HIV/AIDS it can be transmitted that way Carelessness like getting tattooed, all you know HIV/AIDS was through tattoos, see they making a tattoo with the same machine at the same time it's jumping from this one to that one That's how you get the infection of HIV/AIDS

4. Do you think that HIV/AIDS at Westville Prison is high, low, or non-existent?

All the inmates responded that HIV/AIDS was high at the prison According to one inmate *'We are told each and every moment that HIV/AIDS here in prison is very high People are dying everyday here '* Another inmate answered *'Some of the prisoners are making oral sex It is too high because of overcrowding '*

5. Are you aware of anyone contracting HIV/AIDS only after coming into the Prison?

Nearly 43 per cent of the inmates were aware of someone contracting HIV/AIDS in prison, 51 5 per cent were unaware, and 6 per cent were unsure What is astounding is the 'invisible' prevalence of unprotected sexual behaviour within the prison One inmate revealed that *'Yes, an inmate found that after he had engaged in tattoos, thereafter he was tested positive That made him lose hope That tattoo made him very lonely '* Another inmate answered *'Yes lot of young inmates they find themselves contracting HIV/AIDS due to the lack of proper protection*

and they being exposed to different kinds of filthy activities ' Other inmates responded as follows

- *Yes, because I know if you doing sex with the same gender without using condom But inmates are scared to confirm*
- *Yes because some of them have sex without using protection and there is no distribution of condoms in prison*
- *Yes he found this disease after having sex that was unprotected sex with another man*
- *In prison there is sexual harassment that happens, like male raping males*
- *Yes, I know there is a lot of people getting AIDS inside because of their behaviour*
- *No but in prison a sexual harassment are used to happen like male raped each other so there's a possibility of one male who get this HIV in prison There is a lot even, my homeboys they died in front of me in prison*

From the focus group discussions it was ascertained that

> *There is someone that I know who has contracted AIDS here in prison I think it was in 2004 where this guy was staying in this cell, the same section but different cell I remember when he get sick he was referred to the hospital in prison, where we visited him, that's where he elaborated that he's feeling shame now because of what he's having because he was involved with someone that has infected him and in that stage we also called some nurses in order to also witness what he was saying*

6. Are you afraid of contracting HIV in the Prison?

A very high percentage of inmates (82 9%) were afraid of contracting HIV in the prison, 12 7 per cent were not afraid, and 4 2 per cent were unsure The fear of contracting HIV in prison is noted by the inmate's responses to what they personally witness

- *Yes That disease and virus of HIV/AIDS are killer disease No one wants to be killed unless otherwise you are not aware*
- *Yes, prisoners stab other prisoners on the way to the kitchen At least two/ three prisoners get stabbed with the same knife That is one of the greatest ways of contracting the disease Soccer is also another way because they play on concrete floors Razor blades are used to shave or cut hair*
- *Yes sometimes prisoners fight, stab one another and other prisoners who are gang members they can rape me*
- *Yes I'm afraid because I noticed most of people suffering with the same disease*

- *Yes because in this prison we are treated like animals, so it's worst to those who are affected of HIV/AIDS E g food is not healthy it takes you some months to be taken to hospital, some inmates sleep on the floor even those who are sick with HIV/AIDS*
- *Yes because once you are infected your days are numbered*
- *Yes HIV/AIDS is killing and there is no medication to cure it I see a lot of inmates suffer of HIV and they get it here, because if they have sex without a condom with same gender*
- *Yes because in the prison we use hair cut machines and other people have unprotected sex in the jail*
- *Yes I'm afraid because I want to see my family while I'm still alive*

This perpetual fear that inmates had of contracting HIV in prison was further reinforced during the focus group discussions

> *Yes Violence is one of the contributors to the spread of HIV/AIDS because of the way the guys assault one another The guys assault somebody with a lock or a knife, he doesn't hesitate to stab somebody else so whoever is infected gets re-infected Violence is on top of the list*

Other serious challenges that prisoners faced were substantiated by several comments in the focus group discussions One of the major problems is overcrowding One inmate stated

> *The problem is that since you are in this environment and this jail is overcrowded you find that the cell supposed to accommodate about 20 prisoners but due to overcrowding the cell accommodates more than 50 prisoners About 56-58 prisoners stay in one cell All those prisoners are sharing one toilet, one bathroom and we are issued one toilet roll each for a whole month or sometimes five to six weeks*

Linked to the problem of overcrowding is the problem of sharing of equipment

> *Our section where we live is overcrowded and you find that in a section there are 300 to 400 prisoners who share one hair clipper machine for hair cut and that leads to somebody using that hair clipper and maybe he's' got pimples and then there is a sort of bleeding and that very same machine is used by the next inmate and there's like an infection transmission of HIV/AIDS through the same machine that they using and the food that is given to the prisoners is not the right food for the human beings*

Various other inmates complained about the lack of proper medical treatment within the prison

My problem is that I'm a TB patient and the place where I live in my section is very dirty and sometimes when I go down to the hospital I find out that the treatment is not there for me, so what I need is not available, so then I have to wait for maybe one or two months

Infectious Disease and Healthcare at the Westville Prison

Conditions in prison are such that HIV easily takes advantage of its victims Although, in theory, prisoners have access to medical care, in reality there is a clear shortage of medical staff, and this problem is compounded by the overcrowding in the prison Prisons are also said to be a breeding ground for opportunistic diseases, which tend to shorten the progression from initial HIV infection to full-blown AIDS (Hlela 2002 2) In May 2006, fifteen prisoners applied to the Durban High Court for the right to anti-retroviral (hereafter referred to as ARV) treatment The court battle has been going on since April 2006 when the Aids Law Project (ALP) which represents prisoners too, lodged an urgent application for the removal of all obstacles preventing fifteen men and all prisoners who needed ARV treatment from getting it and for the government to table their treatment plan in court (*Sunday Tribune*, 27 August 2006 7) [1] According to the *Sunday Tribune* report, one of the fifteen prisoners, known as MM, died in early August 2006 Officials of the Department of Correctional Services had known since November 2004 that MM qualified for ARV treatment, yet he was not given the treatment until July 2006 The government's treatment guidelines recommend that patients start the ARV treatment once their CD4 count (which measures immunity) drops below 200 In April 2006, three prisoners had CD4 counts of five

On 26 September 2006, the ALP challenged the government's ARV treatment plan for inmates It alleged that the health of the thirty-eight HIV-infected prisoners at Westville Prison is being jeopardised by inadequate medical treatment by the state (*The Daily News*, 26 September 2006 2) [2]

Under national and international law, governments have a moral and ethical obligation to prevent the spread of the disease in prisons, and to provide proper and compassionate care, treatment and support to prisoners living with HIV/AIDS This right is guaranteed in international law and in international rules, guidelines and covenants including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Article 12), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Article 10 1), the United Nations Basic Principles for the Treatment of Prisoners (Principles 5 and 9), and

the South African Constitution This includes the right to medical treatment and to preventative measures and to standards of healthcare equivalent to that available in the community

The results of this research show significant consistency with existing literature on the subject An initial visit and overview of the prison in 2003 revealed expected inappropriate living conditions, especially with inadequate hygiene and ventilation, overcrowding in cells, and frequent references by officials to high-risk sexual behaviour, violence, gang activity and corruption within the prison Sodomy, rape, sexual intercourse and sexual assaults have been reported as regular and normative occurrences in the prisons Over-crowded conditions in the South African prisons facilitate an easy spread of communicable diseases among inmates, of which HIV/AIDS has become the most tempestuous and problematic

Although there is a Correctional Services policy on HIV/AIDS to render an effective and efficient HIV/AIDS and STI healthcare service to prisoners and to release them back into the community with minimal risk to society, there is an enormous gap between policy and practice The policy is not always effectively managed or understood due to the lack of human and financial resources While prisoners living with HIV/AIDS are not isolated and in some prisons receive counselling, there is no uniformity regarding the application of Department of Correctional Services' policy These factors necessitated a revisit to the WMB to gather more substantial information about healthcare in the prison

The Revisit

The revisit to the prison investigated numerous questions about the state of healthcare in WMB after the first few visits to WMB It was decided to gather more information on what the state has to offer the prison inmates and how it impacts upon their individual and collective situations What followed was a series of restrictions imposed by the bureaucracy For instance, on 2 May 2007, armed with all the documentation that I thought was necessary to grant me re-entry into the prison hospital, I approached the senior-most official of the WMB hospital, widely referred to as 'The Head', for an interview His initial reaction was one of reluctance – because, as he lamented, he first needed permission from his Area Commissioner Attempts to contact the Area Commissioner were unsuccessful, so after some persuasion 'The Head' agreed to be interviewed on condition that he did not have to divulge statistics on inmate patients

The interview revealed that in each of the five sections that make up the Westville Prison, a medical facility is available, each of which is as old as the institution itself, that is, since 1986 The medical facility in WMB served as an inpatient hospital for the prison's all five sections and its 12,000 inmates It had 105 beds, of which forty-two catered for 'high care' or more seriously ill patients All 105 beds were reported to be occupied almost continuously However, the availability of medical staff has been an ongoing problem since the prison's opening Twenty years later, that is, only since 2006, a permanent doctor was appointed by the Department of Correctional Services, and only twenty-six of the fifty-two nurses recommended for the entire prison were appointed at the time of the interview Only two nurses at a time serve as day and night duty staff to care for the 105 patients There is a post for a full-time pharmacist However, the state's obstinacy about keeping this post at a comparatively low level and underpaid position has led to ongoing resignations by pharmacists who are substantially better paid in private enterprise The record to date has been that the prison remains for long periods without a pharmacist

The entire debacle that surrounds the allegedly high prevalence of HIV/AIDS is exacerbated by the policies and practices that the authorities have adopted For instance, the administration of ARV medication to inmates with a CD4 count of less than 200 only began in September 2006 But its distribution to affected inmates is dependent upon a permanently employed pharmacist, which the prison often does not have The result is that ARV has to be brought in on a daily basis from another state medical facility, Edendale Hospital, which is approximately 100 km away The spread of HIV/AIDS in the prison is compounded by poor planning as well as cultural factors, particularly by Black inmates Recognising that same-sex intercourse is rife in the prison, the hospital has made condoms available to all inmates However, what was made available was only in one size, and among Black inmates unprotected sex is defended as a culturally normative practice and preferable The accruing mental pressure on inmates, both affected and those who struggle to keep a distance from such activity is a build-up of indescribable anguish While many of them are deservedly incarcerated, they still have anxieties about their families and resources outside the prison Their inability to deal with such anxieties is exacerbated by only two psychologists and eight social workers – who are constrained by having to deal with the most mentally affected only

Conclusion

Against the background of this information, a mockery is made of Section 35 (2) (e) of the Constitution, which states 'Everyone who is detained, including every sentenced prisoner, has the right to conditions of detention that are consistent with human dignity, including at least exercise and the provision, at state expense, of adequate accommodation, nutrition, reading material and medical attention' Similarly, very little appears to have been learnt from the Ugandan prison officials who came to South Africa to share their experiences with their South African counterparts Clearly, more needs to be done to learn from the apparent successes that Uganda has allegedly achieved in controlling the spread of HIV/AIDS While it would be an expected reaction by ordinary citizens to claim that convicted prisoners do not deserve treatment that is on par with law abiding citizens, inmates from the Westville prison do pose a risk to civilian society when they are released, especially since the HIV/AIDS pandemic is proving to be exceptionally costly to South Africa's emerging democracy and its reintegration into the world economy Recurrent reports in the media about this and an absence of the state's challenges to them must imply at least a measure of truth about the impact of AIDS on the economy With this comes a growing negative perception about South Africa and the continent as a whole Added to this is the gruesome evidence of ignorance among the inmates about the prevalence and spread of the virus While often 'ignorance is bliss', in a situation of a dangerously infectious sexually transmitted disease, exacerbated by the use of haircutting and tattooing implements, a fundamental question must be asked about the role of the state in developing an awareness- and consciousness-building programme None of the inmates referred to any sort of aggressive push by the state to ensure the establishment of such a programme The state must be considered equally liable in a situation when a convicted criminal who is released from a poorly administered prison spreads the HIV/AIDS virus through sexual contact with unsuspecting civilians It will have to weigh the cost of the spread of the virus by released offenders against the loss of health, its costs to the state and the eventual loss of life by innocent victims of released prisoners The state is unlikely to make the above cited legislation a reality when prisons are so dangerously over-crowded and prisoners continue to reveal sheer ignorance about the prevalence and spread of HIV/AIDS within the prison boundaries

The evidence in this paper compliments the existing body of literature about the desperate conditions in South African prisons But it also highlights the need for more research to be done on health-care

policies within the prisons, the dynamics and manifestations of overcrowding and for researchers' easier access into prisons. A complimentary working relationship between the Department of Correctional Services and researchers from academic institutions and NGOs can serve to strengthen awareness and policy measures on what needs to be done to arrest the spread of one of the most deadly viruses that humankind has been afflicted with

Notes

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1 *Sunday Tribune* is a weekly newspaper (published every Sunday) in the province of KwaZulu Natal, South Africa.
2 *The Daily News* is a daily newspaper published in the province of KwaZulu Natal, South Africa.

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Alleviating Poverty through Micro-finance: SGSY Experience in Orissa

Sthitapragyan Ray

The realisation of SGSY (Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana) programme outcomes was circumscribed by the weak links in the long implementation chain involving several intermediate stages and complementary resources, but more importantly by the failure to tackle powerlessness of the poor rural women through social mobilisation and to circumvent the structural inadequacies afflicting their quest for sustainable livelihood security in an otherwise backward area As only a tool and an enabling element, micro-finance could go only so far in fighting rural poverty and could be useful only if it allows the poor to become more productive in creating wealth under favourable conditions

[Keywords micro-finance, self-help group, social capital, state-society synergy, *swarozgari*]

Introduction

Micro-finance is understood in India as the 'provision of thrift, credit and other financial services and products of very small amounts to the poor enabling them to raise their income levels and improve living standards' (NABARD 2000, RBI 1999) [1] The importance of micro-finance as an effective development tool to tackle poverty has been well recognised particularly after the Copenhagen Social Development Summit in 1995, the United Nations' declaration of the year 1996 as the International Year for Eradication of Poverty and the decade 1997-2006 as the first International Decade for the Eradication of Poverty, and the World Micro-credit Summit in 1997 The Millennium Development Goal of halving poverty by 2015 and the Eleventh Five-Year Plan's strategy of financial inclusion of the poor to achieve inclusive growth and faster reduction of poverty add further salience to it

The two main models of micro-finance in the country under the self-help group (SHG) are (i) bank linkage model (SBL) and (ii) the micro-finance institution (MFI) model Under SBL, SHGs are formed (in some cases by formal agencies as well) and financed by banks Under MFI, SHGs are formed and financed by MFIs, which obtain resource support from various sources Most of the micro-finance activity in the country is under the SBL model, which is unique to India, and the rest (10-15 per cent of the activity) is through the MFI model, which is internationally more prevalent (GOI 2007) Under the SBL approach, the SHGs are being promoted primarily under the two separate schemes of the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD)/Union Ministry of Finance and the Union Ministry of Rural Development (MORD) NABARD, which has pioneered the SBL model since 1992, was instrumental in the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) including linkage banking as a mainstream activity of banks under the priority sector lending in 1996 The other important scheme under the SBL strategy is the Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) of the MORD (*ibid*) Unlike the 'financial-systems' approach of micro-finance service delivery, with its premium on commercially oriented, minimalist credit, the SGSY typically adopts the 'poverty-lending' approach, characterised by its package of subsidised credit, training and other support services to the poor clients (Robinson 2001) The objective of SGSY, a holistic programme of self-employment, launched on 01 April 1999 following the restructuring of the erstwhile Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) and allied schemes, is to bring the assisted rural poor, particularly women (*swarozgaris*) above the poverty line by organising them into SHGs through the process of social mobilisation Social mobilisation and micro-enterprise development for poverty eradication under SGSY have to be induced and sustained by the District Rural Development Agencies (DRDAs), banks and other self-help promotion institutions (SHPIs) by capacity-building of SHGs, provision of income-generating assets to them through a mix of bank credit and government subsidy, selection of key activities through cluster approach, marketing support, etc (GOI 1999, 2002)

The debate whether the recent initiatives for IRDP reform, including the emphasis on social mobilisation of rural poor through SHGs and better identification of rural micro-entrepreneurs under SGSY, does indeed improve its outreach, impact and sustainability continues at a general level, without much data to inform it While the focus of SGSY on poor rural women is well-founded, nevertheless the policy premise of rural poverty alleviation through social mobilisation and micro-finance needs to be tested on the ground

Social Mobilisation, Social Capital and Anti-Poverty State Intervention

As the flagship anti-poverty programme of the Indian state, with its premium on social mobilisation, SGSY implementation becomes 'the site of tangible exchanges between state and society' (Echeverri-Gent 1993 4) The state-society interaction here is looked at not in terms of either the reductionist society-centred approach, which by denying any space for the relative autonomy of the state reduces state actions to the causal properties of society or the politicist state-centred approach, which assigns more power to the state than it can possibly have by looking at it as an autonomous agent shaping actions of actors in society (see Das 1999)

An alternative interactive approach (see Fox 1993) that combines crucial insights of the above two approaches better suits our analysis here Here the state is looked at 'societally', that is, the state with its relative autonomy is seen as 'embedded' within society, it is seen as having links with different societal actors – SHGs of poor women, NGOs, etc (Evans 1996) The society is also looked at politically, in the sense that the different groups/classes in society are seen as having differential economic and political power and thereby influencing state actions differentially This recognition has necessitated the need for 'social mobilisation' of the poor for poverty alleviation Being 'interdependent and interpenetrate in a multitude of different ways' (Block 1987 21, Jessop 1990 25, Migdal 1994), the state and society in this approach are viewed in terms of a process of interaction between and relation with each other and not just as structures

When SGSY seeks to achieve social mobilisation from below by organising the poor into SHGs, it tries to build on their social capital base, that is, their relations of trust, cooperation, networks and organisations, which can promote cooperative actions (Putnam 1993 167) In response to critiques of IRDP being a top-down, target-oriented and deterministic programme, SGSY is presented as marking a shift in poverty alleviation policy-making in India to a participatory, process-oriented and community-driven mode But, unlike the radical planning emphasis on social mobilisation of the rural poor in opposition to state bureaucracies and modernist forms of knowledge (see Friedmann 1992), SGSY adopts a collaborative approach (see Healey 1997) involving all stakeholders, including the development bureaucracy It seeks to supplement state-run planning and rural development initiatives with local and culturally based knowledge of the *swarozgaris* Recognising that social mobilisation is not a spontaneous process and has to be induced, the

SGSY guidelines (GOI 1999 12-15) put a premium on the role of the state agencies, particularly the DRDAs/blocks to initiate and sustain the process by the formation and strengthening of SHGs and provision of adequate support services to them

Thus, the programme, in addition to relying on the 'bonding' and 'bridging' social capital of the poor (World Bank 2001), that is, the horizontal networks, associations, norms and the trust and information base of the SHGs, also counts on the 'linking' social capital, that is, the relations of trust and cooperation between the rural poor and officials of the state The state-society synergy which SGSY seeks to build and capitalise on has two aspects, namely, embeddedness and complementarity 'Embeddedness' refers to the (face-to-face) ties of mutual trust and co-operation between *swarozgaris* and the government officials (bankers, DRDA/block and other SHPI staff) It is the kind of organic involvement of the government SHPI staff (as recognised in the policy), which is crucial in getting the *swarozgaris*' 'self-help' efforts organised and sustaining their micro-enterprises Instances of this could include SHG meetings where the SHPI officials and poor *swarozgaris* participate to resolve programme-related problems 'Complementarity' refers to the public provision of things (both material and non-material) that the communities do not or can not have, but will complement what they have (local knowledge, experience, labour, etc) (Evans 1996) The SGSY guidelines require the state to provide finance, training, marketing and other support services to complement the self-employment efforts of the poor *swarozgaris*

The participatory approach of the policy, with its focus on dialogue and process, tends to underplay if not ignore power, institutions and the limited abilities of the rural poor, particularly women to stake a claim on their interests Typically, thus, it stops short of a strategy to developing the groups of the poor into a countervailing force and primarily treats SHGs as joint liability groups providing 'social collateral' and a convenient mechanism for delivering programme assistance As the SGSY guidelines state

> SHGs have the advantage of the assistance – be it in terms of credit or technology or market guidance etc – reaching the poor faster and more effectively The groups that are formed with thrift and credit as an entry point have demonstrated that the poor can secure greater access to credit and other support services for enhancing their income levels (GOI 1999 12-13)

Poverty and SGSY in Orissa

The unsatisfactory performance of SGSY has resulted in the Planning Commission slashing the allocation for the programme under the Tenth Plan by over 50 per cent from that proposed by the MORD The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Rural Development (Lok Sabha Secretariat 2005) expressing concern over its poor implementation, commented that SGSY, over four years after its launch, had come unstuck in its mission to tackle rural poverty in the country with none of the states, save Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan, being able to distribute more than 50 per cent of the credit available

Investments under SGSY across the states have been made in proportion to the poor in the population Sixty per cent of the SGSY credit had been disbursed in eastern and central India, which account for 64 per cent of the poor in the country (GOI 2005) A rather high correlation (0 91) between the SGSY credit and concentrations of the rural poor seemed to exist Similar was not the case with the SGSY credit for poor and the recovery rate, the correlation coefficient being 0 21(GOI 2007)

Orissa remains India's poorest state with 47 2 per cent (about 17 million people) of its population, constituting almost 7 per cent of India's poor living below the poverty line (BPL) against the national average of 26 1 per cent (GOI 2001) Some 85 per cent of Orissa's 37 million people live in the rural areas of which almost half (48%) belongs to the BPL category (against the national average of 27%) (*ibid*) Social and regional differences are pronounced, with the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs), constituting 38 6 per cent of the state's population, accounting for more than 40 per cent of its poor (GOI 2002) Orissa has some of the poorest agro-climatic regions in the country In Orissa's southern agro-climatic region, according to 1987-88 data, more than three of every four rural inhabitants lived below the poverty line In the highest incidence of rural poverty by agro-climatic region category in 1987-88, Orissa southern (77% BPL) figure prominently (Dreze and Srinivasan 1996) With a maternal mortality rate of 738 (per 100,000 live births), infant mortality rate of 81 (per 1000 live births) and a high gender gap in literacy rate of 25 per cent against the national averages of 408, 67 6 and 21 7 respectively, the state occupies eleventh position among the fifteen major Indian states in terms of the human development index ranking (GOI 2002)

Orissa, having 6 8 per cent of the country's poor population has received six per cent of the all-India distribution of SGSY credit Since the beginning of the programme during 1999-00 till 2003-04, a total of

328,251 *swarozgaris* have been covered under SGSY, with a total investment of Rs 70,428 33 lakhs (including the credit and subsidy components of Rs 44,716 52 lakhs and Rs 25,711 81 lakhs respectively) The per capita SGSY credit disbursed to the poor in Orissa is Rs 38 6, less than the national average of Rs 43 5, and the SGSY loan recovery rate in Orissa at 32 0 per cent is below the national average of 45 8 per cent (GOI 2003, GOO [Government of Orissa] 2001, 2002a, 2003, 2004, 2005) The SGSY credit disbursement, it would appear, has more to do with the directives of the union and state governments (based on the proportion of the poor) than with programme performance Coinciding with the inception of SGSY, the Government of Orissa launched in March 2001 the Mission Shakti[2] to empower rural women in the state through the formation of SHGs and provision of micro-credit for poverty alleviation The premium on micro-finance targeting of SHGs of poor rural women as a viable means of marrying gender, poverty alleviation and empowerment concerns is clearly evident in this strategy More than 20 lakh women belonging to 152,000 SHGs have been covered under the Mission by 2005 (GOO 2006)

Against this background, the present article makes an attempt to analyse the impact of SGSY on women *swarozgaris* in Orissa with reference to Ganjam district[3] keeping in view the following main objectives

(i) to study the administrative and institutional processes at different levels and stages of the programme implementation, and
(ii) to assess the impact of the programme on the economic and social life of the *swarozgaris*

SGSY in Ganjam

Ganjam district comprises three sub-divisions, twenty-two blocks, 475 gram panchayats and 3,171 villages covering an area of 8,200 sq km with a population of thirty-two lakhs As the most populous district, it constitutes about 9 per cent of the total population of the state More than 80 per cent (82 4%) of district population, which forms part of the poorest southern agro-climatic region of the state, lives in rural areas, out of which 55 per cent (3 02 lakh families) live BPL The district population, of which SCs and STs constitute 22 per cent, has a male-female ratio of 1 1, a female literacy rate of just 47 7 per cent, a high infant mortality rate of 133, and has more than half (51%) of girls marrying below 18 years of age (GOO 2001, NIHFW 2002)

As a centrally sponsored anti-poverty programme, SGSY, though designed and administered by the MORD, is implemented by the state

government through the Ganjam DRDA The Panchayati Raj Department of e Government of Orissa is in overall charge of the programme The programme is monitored by the State-level SGSY (SLSGSY) Committee chaired by the Chief Secretary, and the District-level SGSY (DLSGSY) Committee, and is implemented at the block level by the Block-level SGSY (BLSGSY) Committees The credit financing is made by the pu' 'ic sector and Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) under the lead bank in the district, that is, the Andhra Bank with participating banks like the State Bank of India, the Rusikulya Gramya Bank and the Indian Overseas Bank Government assistance is shared between the union and the state governments in the ratio of 75 per cent and 25 per cent The union rnment's share is released directly to DRDA This money is to be ed by DRDA for training (10%), revolving fund (10%), infrastructure (20%), and subsidy for economic activities (60%) (GOI 1999, 2002, 2004) The programme guidelines stipulate that monthly income from the activity to be undertaken by the *swarozgari* should not be less than Rs 2,000, net of repayment of the bank loan in the third year The programme has in-built safeguards for the weaker sections, with 50 per cent benefits reserved for SCs and STs and 50 per cent of the groups formed in each block are expected to be exclusively for women who will account for at least 40 per cent of the *swarozgaris* (GOI 1999, 2004)

Ganjam combines features of both the SBL approach and the MFI approach in SGSY implementation The Mahila Sanchayika Sangha (MASS)[4] started during 1998-99 as a block-level (B-MASS) and district-level (D-MASS) federation of village-level women SHGs (WSHG), has over the years graduated into an MFI MASS functions in the Agency Model of MFI,[5] which is basically bank driven In contrast to the top-down approach of credit cooperatives, which serve only as credit agencies, MASS, like the Grameen Bank of Bangladesh, took a bottom-up approach to providing both thrift and credit facilities to poor rural women In taking the bottom-up approach of federating village-level SHGs, MASS also shares an uncanny resemblance with the cluster approach adopted by the Grameen Bank of Bangladesh to federate its own solidarity groups, one major difference being the larger size of the MASS SHGs (comprising 10-20 members) in contrast to the smaller solidarity groups of five borrowers in the Grameen model

All the qualified MASS SHGs become eligible for the SGSY assistance The enrolment of a WSHG in B-MASS (criterion being completion of a minimum period of six months from the date of SHG opening a savings bank account) is treated as being equivalent to the First Grading Test of SGSY After three months of membership, the group becomes eligible for availing of loans from B-MASS The SGSY

Revolving Fund to the groups is routed through the B-MASS The Second Grading Test for availing of bank loan under SGSY is jo ly conducted by a team consisting of the Block Development Officer (BDO), the Banker, the Child Development Project Officer (CDPO), the Project Officer and President/Secretary of the B-MASS

The SHG movement in Ganjam has apparently received a major boost from the rural women empowerment mission by becoming an S..G surplus district, as per the target of the Mission Shakti Thus, there is the involvement of two departments, that is, the Panchayati Raj Department (the nodal department in the case of SGSY) and the Women and Child Development Department (the nodal department in the case of MASS/CDPO/Mission Shakti) in SGSY implementation in the district This distinctive design feature in Ganjam severely limits the role of i e panchayat functionaries in women *swarozgari* selection as the programme guideline prescribed three-member *swarozgari* selection team of BDO, Banker and the PRI (panchayati raj institution) representative does not operate Ganjam has also a District Supply and Marketing Society (DSMS),[6] the district arm of the Orissa Rural Development and Marketing Society (ORMAS), to provide among other things, technical assistance, skill training and backward and forward linkages in product marketing to the SGSY *swarozgaris* Ganjam is one of the leading districts in the state as regards the SGSY implementation, particularly in terms of covering women *swarozgaris* (Tables 1 and 2) Unlike in other districts, some of the SHGs assisted in Ganjam are mixed groups consisting of both BPL and non-BPL members

SGSY and Women *Swarozgaris*: A Micro View

In order to assess the process of implementation of SGSY and its subsequent impact on women *swarozgaris*, three blocks of Ganjam district – namely, Sorada, Dharakote, and Sanakhemundi – were selected, based on the concentration of women *swarozgaris*[7] The 180 *swarozgaris*, selected at the rate of three from each of the sixty WSHGs assisted during 2000-01, were spread across fifty-six villages in the three blocks (see Tables 3 and 4) While selecting the SHGs and *swarozgaris*, care was taken as far as practicable to give adequate representation to different social groups, particularly the SCs and STs Among the three members selected from each SHG, effort was made to include one office-bearer (President/Secretary) and two other members The women *swarozgaris* were interviewed with the help of semi-structured schedules Focus group discussions with the women were also conducted Officials, including the Project Director, DRDA and BDOs, bankers, and the MASS

Table 1 Physical Achievement under SGSY in Ganjam and Orissa (1999-00 to 2003-04)

Year	Ganjam					Orissa				
	Target	Total No	No of SC	No of ST	No of Women	Target	Total No	No of SC	No of ST	No of Women
1999-00	8924	3876 (43 0)	941 (24 3)	337 (8 7)	1929 (49 8)	99583	74633 (75 0)	15025 (20 0)	18247 (24 0)	21626 (29 0)
2000-01	9366	8958 (96 0)	2371 (26 5)	715 (8 0)	3571 (39 9)	99094	86171 (87 0)	18856 (22 0)	20202 (23 0)	21347 (25 0)
2001-02	6410	7037 (110 0)	2727 (38 8)	636 (9 03)	4829 (68 6)	53755	59233 (110 0)	13773 (23 0)	16158 (27 0)	19842 (34 0)
2002-03	3460	3690 (107 0)	1434 (38 9)	363 (9 8)	2717 (73 6)	45293	48925 (108 0)	10808 (22 0)	15334 (31 0)	21149 (43 0)
2003-04	4152	5350 (129 0)	2221 (41 5)	330 (6 2)	4895 (91 5)	54348	59289 (109 0)	13527 (22 8)	17777 (30 0)	38667 (65 2)

Note Calculations based on official figures, SC - Scheduled Caste, ST - Scheduled Tribe, figures refer to *swarozgaris*, percentage in parenthesis

Source Ganjam DRDA, Directorate of Panchayati Raj, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Orissa

Table 2 Financial Achievement under SGSY in Ganjam and Orissa (1999-00 to 2003-04)
(Rs in lakhs)

Year	Ganjam				Orissa			
	Total Investment	Subsidy	Credit	Average Investment Per *Swarozgari*	Total Investment	Subsidy	Credit	Average Investment Per *Swarozgari*
1999-00	623 91	203 54	420 37	16,097	14836.72	5396.32	9440 40	19,880
2000-01	1882 08	621 22	1260 86	21,010	18961.30	6627 43	12333 87	22,004
2001-02	1407 78	516 52	891 26	20,005	12963.38	4699 66	8263 72	21,885
2002-03	934 75	345 63	589.12	25,332	10957 04	4068 16	6888 88	22,396
2003-04	1080 31	444.15	636 16	20,193	12709 89	4920 24	7789 65	21,437

Note Calculations based on official figures
Source Ganjam DRDA Directorate of Panchayati Raj, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Orissa

and DSMS officials were interviewed with the help of semi-structured schedules and checklists Secondary data were collected from the blocks, DRDA, Directorates of Economics and Statistics, the Mission Shakti, panchayats, and from central government sources The fieldwork for the study was carried out during 2004-05

Table 3 Block- and Village-wise Distribution of Sample *Swarozgaris*

Block	No of Villages	No of Sample WSHGs	No of Sample *Swarozgaris*
Sorada	20	20	60
Sanakhemundi	19	20	60
Dharakote	17	20	60
Total	56	60	180

Table 4 Social Composition of *Swarozgaris* assisted during 2000-01 in Selected Blocks

Block	SC	ST	General	Total	Women
Dharakote	73	111	189	373	286
	(19 57)	(29 76)	(50 67)	(100 0)	(77 0)
Sanakhemundi	120	57	293	470	210
	(25 53)	(12 13)	(62 34)	(100 0)	(45 0)
Sorada	130	122	362	614	336
	(27 17)	(19 87)	(58 96)	(100 0)	(55 0)

Note Calculated from Block-office figures, percentage in parenthesis
Source BDO, Sorada, Sanakhemundi, and Dharakote

Socioeconomic Background of *Swarozgaris*

The socioeconomic condition of the sample *swarozgaris* is presented in Table 5 While SCs constitute one-fourth of the sample, STs and the other backward castes (OBCs) constitute 21 per cent and 38 per cent respectively Thus, the representation of the backward groups is very high (more than 80%), with those from upper caste groups constituting a little more than 15 per cent of the sample All but four sample households belonged to the BPL category Nearly half of the household members (48%) were workers, but most (70%) were engaged as marginal workers The male-female workforce ratio reflected the district sex ratio

The sample *swarozgaris* were found to be mostly working as marginal workers (agricultural labour, housewives, petty business, etc) earning little extra income, before starting on their micro-enterprise ventures While half of the *swarozgaris* belonged to the 30-40 age group, another

Table 5 Socioeconomic Profile of *Swarozgaris*

Item	Block			Overall
	Sorada	Sanakhemundi	Dharakote	
Caste				
SC	14 (23 13)	16 (26 74)	15 (25 0)	45 (25 0)
ST	12 (19 78)	7 (11 7)	18 (30 0)	37 (20 5)
OBC	24 (39 95)	30 (49 86)	14 (23 3)	68 (37 8)
OC	10 (17 14)	7 (11 7)	13 (21 7)	30 (16 7)
Total	60 (100 0)	60 (100 0)	60 (100 0)	180 (100 0)
Age (Year)				
20-30	10 (16 6)	20 (33 3)	23 (38 3)	53 (29 4)
30-40	33 (55 0)	29 (48 3)	28 (46 7)	90 (50 0)
40-50	16 ((26 7)	11 (18 3)	7 (11 7)	34 (18 9)
50-60	1 (1 7)	0 (0 0)	2 (3 3)	3 (1 7)
Total	60 (100 0)	60 (100 0)	60 (100 0)	180 (100 0)
Marital Status				
Married	57 (95 0)	58 (96 6)	56 (93 3)	171 (95 0)
Unmarried	0 (0 0)	0 (0 0)	0 (0 0)	0 (0 0)
Widowed	3 (5 0)	1 (1 7)	4 (6 7)	8 (4 4)
Separated	0 (0 0)	1 (1 7)	0 (0 0)	1 (6)
Total	60 (100 0)	60 (100 0)	60 (100 0)	180 (100 0)
BPL Status				
BPL	59 (98 3)	59 (98 3)	58 (96 7)	176 (97 8)
Non-BPL	1(1 7)	1 (1 7)	2 (3 3)	4 (2 2)
Total	60 (100 0)	60 (100 0)	60 (100 0)	180 (100 0)
Family Size (No of Members)				
≤5	40 (66 7)	38 (63 3)	41 (68 3)	119 (66 1)
5-7	15 (25 0)	19 (31 7)	16 (26 7)	50 (27 8)
>7	5 (8 3)	3 (5 0)	3 (5 0)	11 (6 1)
Total	60 (100 0)	60 (100 0)	60 (100 0)	180 (100 0)
Literacy Level				
Illiterate	18 (30 0)	14 (23 3)	16 (26 7)	48 (26 7)
Literate upto Primary	8 (13 3)	7 (11 7)	7 (11 7)	22 (12 2)
Literate up to Secondary	5 (8 4)	4 (6 7)	5 (8 3)	14 (7 8)
Neo-literate	29 (48 3)	35 (58 3)	32 (53 3)	96 (53 3)
Total	60 (100 0)	60 (100 0)	60 (100 0)	180 (100 0)
Workers in Family				
Male Workers	79 (23 8)	82 (27 2)	63 (21 3)	224 (24 1)
Female Workers	72 (21 7)	80 (26 6)	73 (24 7)	225 (24 2)
Total Workers	151 (45 5)	162 (53 8)	136 (45 9)	449 (48 3)
Main Workers	45 (29 8)	53 (32 7)	36 (26 5)	134 (29 8)
Marginal Workers	106 (70 2)	109 (67 3)	100 (73 5)	315 (70 2)

Note SC - Scheduled Caste, ST - Scheduled Tribe, OBC - Other Backward Caste, OC - Other Caste, BPL - Below Poverty Line, percentage in parenthesis
Source Field Survey

about 30 per cent were from the 20-30 group Interestingly none was found to be less than 20 or more than 60 years of age While a vast majority (95%) was married, widows formed about 5 per cent of the sample Two-thirds of the households were having five or less members and just 6 per cent had more than seven members

Neo-literates constituted more than half of the sample (53 3%) The entire credit for imparting functional literacy to the women goes, not to the campaigns of the Literacy Mission, but to the efforts (a combination of persuasion and pressure) SHPIs, particularly of the bankers The bankers' insistence on the women *swarozgaris* putting their signatures rather than their thumb impressions on documents had borne fruit But still 27 per cent of the sample (mostly in higher age groups belonging to ST/SC categories) used their thumb impressions only Only 8 per cent and 12 per cent of the women had studied up to secondary and primary levels respectively While the material and educational deprivations of the women were obvious, the relatively better educated among them were found to have taken group formation initiatives

Cluster Approach and Key Activity

The scheme envisaged detailed planning at the DRDA/Block levels, for key activity selection through cluster approach Both the DRDA/Block records and field enquiry did not indicate selection of key activity through a structured and participatory process involving gram panchayat functionaries, *swarozgaris*, line departments, bankers, etc and preparation of techno-economic feasibility reports It was found that selection of key activity was a type of opinion survey and selections were basically based on the availability of local resources There were five or six key activities that were common to the blocks in the district The key activities under the composite category of village and cottage industries were listed in most of the blocks and these included eight or ten sub-activities like betel-nut making, leaf-plate making, rope making, and the preparation of *sabai* grass products and spices This was despite the fact that the DLSGSY Committee was to select not more than four or five key activities per block Indiscriminate selection of key activities and the resultant internal competition reduced the capacity of local markets to absorb the output of the *swarozgaris*, thereby reducing their scheme incomes further

Training

The number of SHGs in the district increased from 2,770 in 1999-2000 to 12,546 in 2003-04 However, the first phase basic orientation training

was imparted to only 4,927 SHGs of which only 1,937 SHGs could be given skill up-gradation training Expenditure on training under SGSY was just about 1 6 per cent against 10 per cent of the total expenditure, as stipulated in the guidelines The effort under SGSY is to ensure development of sustainable micro-enterprises through transfer of appropriate technology to the rural poor Information gathered revealed that the three blocks had not spent any amount on technology creation The impact of the poor utilisation of the training fund was quite palpable on the *swarozgaris* It was found that 53 per cent of the sample *swarozgaris* had not received the mandatory basic orientation training (to be imparted by the MASS after loan sanction but before disbursal) on SHG functioning, financial management, etc It was pointed out that training was primarily imparted to group leaders like the President and Secretary Even here, it was found that about one-third of the group office-bearers had not received the basic orientation training As for the skill development training to be imparted by the concerned line departments, it was found that three-fifth of the sample remained uncovered

The required co-ordination between DRDA/Block, MASS, the concerned line departments, and the financing banks was conspicuous by its absence No effort was made to involve NGOs in the capacity building process It was found that just about one-fourth of the sample SHGs had attended review camps organised by DRDA/Block/MASS and financing banks to assess the performance of SHGs Also, the full potential of the training imparted could not be realised due to factors like low literacy levels, poor and insufficient programme content, etc It is no wonder then that all the sample *swarozgaris* were unanimous in their opinion on the need for expansion in training coverage and improvement in its quality content

The impact of poor capacity-building was quite palpable in more ways than one In almost three-fifth of the cases, other persons (usually a known male) were found to be involved in group record-keeping and financial transactions This also provided an opportunity to unscrupulous elements to take advantage of the situation (see Case 1)

Asset, Income and Employment

Among the sample swarojgaris the average per capita investment worked out to around Rs 11,000 against the district and state averages of Rs 21,000 and Rs 22,000 respectively during 2000-01 (see Table 2) Among other factors, this discrepancy was due to the gap between the amount of credit sanctioned and the amount released A substantial portion of the credit released was deposited in the banks either in the form of fixed or

Case 1

In Sorada block a rural fixer, Sanyasi Panda (name changed), in collusion with some unscrupulous SHPI staff, was found to have short-changed members of three sample SHGs None of the *swarozgaris* had any idea about the programme under which they were assisted Nor did they know anything about the loan amount sanctioned, the amount disbursed and the subsidies involved In an environment characterised by structural inequality and asymmetric information flow, giving subsidised credit to poor, untrained and credulous women in the name of self-help led to the emergence of brokerage system It contributed further to distortion of information and diversion of entitlements from the poor to non-poor The Maa Laksmi SHG, a twelve-member SC group in Suramani village, headed by Lakhmi Behera, an illiterate and middle-aged widow, was assisted under SGSY with a loan of Rs 2 lakhs (including Rs 1 lakh subsidy) from Andhra Bank, Mundamarai The group, in the words of its President, left everything to the broker Their micro-enterprise of spice making was in shambles, giving little extra income to the members Similar was the case with the 16-member Maa Tulsi SHG in Bhaliagocha village which was sanctioned a SGSY loan of Rs1 84 lakh (including subsidy of Rs 92,000) from Andhra Bank, Mundamarai for badi/papaad making The group, despite having literate office-bearers (President Prabhasini Nayak and Secretary Minati Nayak) seemed to have fallen into the traps of the broker Out of the sanctioned loan amount, Rs 80,000 was disbursed to the group In actuality the group received Rs 51,200 (Rs 3,200 per member) and the rest (Rs 28,800) was kept as rake-off by Sanyasi Panda But the official figures show the entire loan amount (including the subsidy) as having been disbursed to the group The group members were completely clueless about what happened to the rest of the loan amount including the subsidy As the amount actually received by the group was too low to start its venture, they had to supplement it by borrowing Rs 60,000 from MASS at 12 per cent interest But interestingly enough, while the *swarozgaris* could hardly earn Rs 300 per month, the official monitoring report painted a rosy picture of the group by giving a handsome monthly income of Rs 1,200 to the members The thirteen-member Ladu Kishore SHG in Bisnupur village, headed by the neo-literates Ahlya Pradhan and Padmini Pradhan, was assisted under SGSY with a loan of Rs 1 65 lakhs (including the subsidy of Rs 82,000) from Andhra Bank, Mundamarai With little support from veterinary staff and without the mandatory insurance coverage of the SGSY goats, the goatery activity of the group suffered a heavy loss in an attack of epidemic With little backward and forward linkages, the stone chips activity of the group was not faring well either The negative social capital of collusion between middlemen and officials combined with the unequal 'vertical linkages' of *swarozgaris* with these middlemen sans inadequate complementary support from the state had cost the groups dearly

savings bank deposits In 43 per cent of the cases it was found that the banks released only the subsidy component and kept the remaining amount in the form of savings bank/fixed deposits Therefore, there was

a gap in per capita credit sanctioned and actual effective investment by the *swarozgaris* This is despite strict guideline provisions prohibiting any kind of part or under financing The bankers cited the problems of poor absorption capacity and recovery performance, wilful default, involvement of middlemen, improper fund utilisation, diversion of funds, etc to justify the practice

The involvement of brokers and utilisation of loan amount for more than one purpose further contributed to the problem Ninety-four sample *swarozgaris* (52 2%) revealed that sometimes they had to fall back upon the MASS and micro-fund credit lines to meet their enterprise-related needs, including repayment schedules While 40 per cent of the women complained about the delay in release of loans (which ranged between two and seven months), about one-fourth expressed concern over the practice of procuring scheme assets (livestock, machines, etc) from agencies of the bankers' choice without consulting them

In order to bring *swarozgaris* above the poverty line, the net monthly income of those assisted under SGSY is targeted to be not less than Rs 2,000 per month, after three years of programme assistance Yet none of the sample *swarozgaris* achieved the desired monthly income of Rs 2,000 The average annual incremental income from SGSY was put at Rs 6,635 (or per capita monthly scheme income of Rs 553) (see Table 6) Many *swarozgaris* (40%) reported annual incremental income between Rs 4000 and 8000 Eleven *swarozgaris* (6%) did not report any additional scheme income, including the seven who reported losses

Table 6 Annual SGSY Income of *Swarozgaris*

Net Annual Incremental Income from SGSY (in Rs)	No of *Swarozgaris*	Average Net Annual Incremental Income from SGSY (in Rs)
No additional income	11 (6 1)	Nil
< 4000	47 (26 1)	2110
4001 - 8000	72 (40 0)	6180
8001 - 12000	29 (16 1)	10,530
12001 - 16000	11 (6 1)	14,780
16001 - 20000	10 (5 6)	18,230
20001 - 24000	Nil	Nil
> 24001	Nil	Nil
Total	180 (100 0)	6635

Note Percentage in parenthesis
Source Field Survey

Confirming the earlier evidence of the significance of initial income for micro-finance impact (Hume and Mosley 1996, Hashemi 1997,

Rahman 1997), it was found that those in the lower pre-SGSY income group earned less than those in the higher income group (see Table 7) But, interestingly, those in the highest income group also did not report much improvement in their incremental income as they had invested in low-return agricultural activities Those in the middle-income group were found to have made the most of their investments, relatively speaking

Table 7 Distribution of *Swarozgaris* by Pre- and Post-SGSY Annual Incremental Income

Annual Incremental Income (in Rs) → / Pre-SGSY Annual Income (in Rs) ↓	Loss	No Profit No Loss	<4000	4001-8000	8001-12000	12001-16000	16001-20000	Total
<5000	3	1	25	12	6	1	---	48
5001-10000	2	2	16	52	9	6	---	87
10001-15000	1	1	6	8	11	4	4	35
15001-20000	1	Nil	Nil	Nil	1	Nil	5	7
20001-25000	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	1	Nil	1	2
25001-30000	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	1	Nil	Nil	1
>30001	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Total	7	4	47	72	29	11	10	180

Source Field Survey

Primary sector activities constituted the major portfolio of investments (59%), followed by tertiary sector activities (25%) and secondary sector activities (16%) Little sectoral change was noticed in the occupational patterns of the sample women after scheme assistance, the only change being in the increased quantum of activities The selection of programme assets had seldom any link with the income sought to be generated by such investment Rather than generating higher return 'entrepreneurial' micro-enterprises (Asian Development Bank 1997, Cotter 1996, Liedholm and Mead 1999), SGSY was found to have generated mostly low-return 'survival' activities for the *swarozgaris* In most cases, no details like use of the infrastructure by the *swarozgaris*, inventory of assets created, benefits derived, maintenance of assets, etc

were maintained in the study blocks Instances of inadequate insurance coverage, particularly in case of the livestock assets under the mandatory Master Policy Agreement, delayed settlement of claims and rejection of genuine cases based on flimsy grounds given by the veterinary doctor, also came to notice during fieldwork

Marketing Support

The *swarozgaris* primarily relied upon the local market (nearby village, town) to sell their products Two-third of the *swarozgaris* expressed their concerns over the inadequate backward and forward linkages, including non-availability of raw materials, poor power supply and veterinary services, improper and inadequate storage facilities for machinery, raw material and livestock, lack of adequate marketing avenues, etc Only forty-three of the sample *swarozgaris* (23 9%) were found to have attended marketing *melas*/exhibitions Due to inadequate marketing support from DSMS, the *swarozgaris* evidently did not get reasonable prices for their goods (see Case 2) No effort seemed to have been made to improve SHG products in terms of standardisation and certification (like the initiatives in Madhaya Pradesh and Maharastra for product branding by setting up AGMARK Laboratory at Wardha out of SGSY infrastructure funds, etc) despite availability of funds (at Rs 5 lakh per DRDA plus extra amounts from the MORD for market interventions) The only exception was found in the case of Orissa State Co-operative Milk Producers' Federation Limited, which seemed to have a well-organised network, particularly along the so-called milk-routes in the research areas to provide a marketing avenue to the dairy-unit *swarozgaris* The Federation had also endeavoured to ensure quality input supplies like cattle feed etc through the village dairy co-operatives

SHGs: Form and Substance

Out of the sixty sample SHGs, fourteen were exclusively SC groups, twelve, exclusively ST groups, and sixteen, exclusive OBC groups, while seven comprised only general caste members, eleven were mixed in caste composition Thus, traditional (primordial) ties remained an important basis for group formation among rural women Yet the theoretical as well as the practical significance of these groups lies in their ability to organize and transform traditional relationships into non-traditional ones, in ways that facilitate development (Geertz 1962) Non-BPL members constituted four per cent of the group membership Sixty-nine per cent of the groups comprised ten/fifteen members, while the rest (31%) consisted

Case 2
The Maa Kothari SHG, a fourteen-member general caste group, with four APL members, in the Mundamarai village of Dharakote block, was assisted with a loan of Rs100, 000 (including a subsidy Rs49, 000) from the District Central Co-operative Bank, Aska under the much-hyped Shakti Gaon Gas scheme, a joint initiative of the Indian Oil Corporation Ltd and the DSMS, the district arm of the ORMAS While the dealership of the gas had been given to the DSMS by the Indian Oil Corporation, the Maa Kothari SHG, covered under the SGSY loan, had to serve as an extension counter for gas cylinders at the block level But the SHG members, who earlier won a prize from the government for their achievement, had lost all hopes of running a successful enterprise due to the absence of adequate backward and forward linkages (timely cylinder supply to meet market needs), neglect of mandatory training requirements and inadequate infrastructure facilities to the group Despite having relatively affluent and literate members and led by an energetic, educated and articulate Babita Sahoo, a former Anganwadi worker, the group was hard-pressed to fall back on other sources, including its pre-SGSY venture of retailing ready-made garments, to meet its loan repayment schedules These *swarozgaris*, like most other SHG members in the three blocks, never bothered to ventilate their problems before their panchayat members/other political leaders, whom they did not trust in the first place The absence of complementary support services from the state, compounded by lack of positive vertical linkages, resulted in the failure to derive development synergy from the working of an otherwise good project with well-meaning *swarozgaris*

of more than fifteen members The average size of the group was thirteen, but the tribal groups had a lower average membership (that is, ten) The sample SHGs followed the practice of monthly group meetings, save in the case of emergencies

All the groups had office bearers (President and Secretary), bye-laws and recorded group meetings But in almost three-fifth of the cases, other persons (usually a known male) were found to be involved in group record-keeping and financial transactions Save in a few cases (less than 20%) no rotation of group leadership was noticed But there was little complaint from the members about it, as they found the leaders (usually the founder members) a unifying force Seventy-seven per cent of *swarozgaris* mentioned peer pressure and the group micro-fund as the two most vital aspects of group lending It was found that the Block and MASS staff, including the Social Education Officers, anganwadi workers, supervisors, female village level workers and CDPOs had played key roles in WSHG formation process There was little or no involvement of NGOs and PRIs in it save in a few cases The mostly apolitical functioning of the SHGs and a high level of distrust of the *swarozgaris* in their local representatives were evident from the fact that

a majority of them (78%) never bothered to approach the gram panchayats to address their micro-enterprise related problems (see Case 3) The dearth of pro-active NGOs in the study area did not help the matters either The grading of SHGs was done by the BDO/CDPO/MASS/banker team and not by any independent agency as indicated in guidelines

Case 3

The Maa Mangla SHG (a 15-member group) was part of the Manikeswari SHG Federation of four SHGs (a 56-member body) in the Daseipur village of T Govindpur Panchayat Under SGSY, the group was sanctioned a loan of Rs 4 20 lakhs from Andhra Bank, Podamarai for integrated dairy and fishery activities Out of the sanctioned amount, Rs 2 80 lakhs (including the subsidy component of Rs 1 25 lakhs) had been disbursed to the group The group had been able to repay Rs 58,000 The group was found to be doing reasonably well particularly in the pisciculture activity by taking the Gopal Ganda Dam, on lease from the Fishery Department for five years The group members received adequate support services for both its dairy and fishery activities from the government, including training and exposure visits to places like the Centre for Fresh Water Aquaculture in the state capital Prior to forming the SHG, the backward caste SHG members, were mere housewives without any independent source of income But the group activities had, on an average, given them a monthly income of about Rs800 The group members also did not hesitate to make explicit their political ambitions like putting up candidates in the Panchayat elections The key intervening variable here (which was conspicuous by its absence in most other cases of failure) seemed to be the active support the group received from the local MLA and state minister in charge of Fisheries and Animal Husbandry, in whose constituency Mohana, the village lies Unlike the apolitical nature of most other study SHGs in these blocks, the strong political linkages of this SHG clearly paid handsome development dividends

Monthly contributions to the group corpus (micro-fund), ranging from Rs 20 to Rs 50, but in majority of cases (70%) from Rs 20 to Rs 30, were made in all SHGs and a high degree of regularity was maintained The tribal groups had lower contribution rates The interest rates on loans from micro-fund varied according to purpose and ranged from 18 to 30 per cent per annum (with 20% being the preferred rate) Though the interest rate was apparently high, as the group members themselves pointed out, it was much less than the usurious rates of more than 60 per cent charged by local moneylenders It was designed to ensure repayment performance and to sustain the group corpus The interest rate for giving loans to non-members from the group corpus was usually higher than that for members On-lending, as a form of saving had not only enabled *swarozgaris* to deal with uncertain programme income and

expenditure flows and to widen their social networks Contrary to the thesis that the poor would only resort to informal financial practices if denied access to formal credit (Adams and Fitchett 1992), it was found that the access to formal credit (from MASS and from bank under SGSY) led to adaptations and development of informal financial practices in the form of on-lending This had become the mainstay of the vast majority of the sample SHGs On-lending, being strongly embedded in the socio-economic context of the *swarozgaris*, highlights the resilience of the informal modes of financing (Geertz 1962, Ardener 1964, Bouman 1977) Their autonomy from the state and their innovative, flexible and reciprocal risk-management practices make them attractive options for the poor (Ardener and Burman 1995, Bouman and Hospes 1994)

Social Impact

Independent income, an information-asset base and extra-household social networks had made these poor women more assertive, and majority of them acknowledged greater individual leverage in investment decisions (see Table 8) The women revealed that conditional access to credit and subsidy under SGSY (condition being SHG membership) did indeed diminish the resistance of husbands to their wives' participation in group activities Seventy-three per cent acknowledged the role of group micro-fund and savings bank account in making it possible for them to protect part of their income from men's leverage and providing them with longer-term access to financial resources and increasing their ability to raise emergency funds on their own The slow progress made by them in areas of mobility, literacy, exposure to information, civic participation, access to institutional credit, freedom from usurious moneylenders, etc was also in evidence These changes, though incremental, were significant as these were the areas where observance of traditional norms was pronounced A change in lending technology from the IRDP-style direct bank-borrower credit delivery to the SGSY pattern of combining credit with financial and social group intermediation made a difference, though at a lower level But activism by *swarozgaris* on issues like sale of liquor, atrocities on women, etc remained very limited The reason for this seemed to be the preoccupation of these poor women with their daily survival activities, including their micro-enterprises, which left them with little time and energy to devote to 'public good' The lack of political consciousness and awareness of rights contributed to this relative lack of activism on their part Interaction with and putting forth problems before officials by the *swarozgaris* emerged as a grey area (see Table 8) Instances when the

Table 8 Socioeconomic Impact of SHG-SGSY Linkage

Sl No	Aspects of Socioeconomic Change	Before Linkage (% of Members)	After Linkage (% of Members)	Change (in %)
1	Independent source of income	24	94	70
2	Ability to spend money independently	14	73	59
3	Regular savings	8	94	86
4	Borrowing from money lender	76	4	72
5	Longer term access to financial resources and ability to raise emergency funds	Nil	73	73
6	Improvement in household consumption pattern	Nil	58	58
7	Perceived enhancement in social status	Nil	58	58
8	Voice in household economic transactions	Nil	73	73
9	Physical abuse by husband/in-law	47	22	25
10	Migration of male family member	23	20	3
11	Freedom of movement	24	83	59
12	Financial transaction with banks	Nil	100	100
13	Functional Literacy	20	73	53
14	Access to development information	4	51	47
15	Putting forth problems before government officials	Nil	32	32
16	Membership of milk co-operatives, school committees etc	Nil	53	53
17	Activism on social issues (liquor sale, women atrocity, dowry etc)	Nil	21	21
18	Development of networks, relationships beyond family	16	100	84

Note N = 180
Source Field Survey

pro-poor state officials took pro-active steps to sort out the problems of the *swarozgaris* remained few and far between (see Case 4)

Programme Monitoring

The perfunctory programme-monitoring, despite guideline provisions to the contrary, did not help matters None of the *swarozgaris* (or SHGs) was provided with the Vikas Patrika, a key monitoring document Also the *swarozgaris* (who were otherwise eligible by being more than 18 and less than 60 years of age) were not covered under the Group Life Insurance Scheme of the Life Insurance Corporation as provided for in SGSY guidelines The Headquarters officials associated with SGSY implementation visited the villages sporadically No proper schedule of

Case 4

Runu Gowda, a backward caste landless woman in her mid-thirties and wife of a migrant labourer working in far-flung Surat, was instrumental in setting up the thirteen-member Maa Godadei SHG in Janubili village of Dharakote block Considering the traditional caste-based specialisation of the group, it was assisted for dairy activity under SGSY with a loan (including subsidy) of Rs 3 65 lakhs from the State Bank of India, Dharakote Despite inadequate support services, the *swarozgaris* were earning about Rs 600 per month after making regular loan repayments The indifference and non-cooperation of the local veterinarian including his refusal to provide the mandatory insurance coverage to she-buffaloes bought by some *swarozgaris* from outside the selected Lombodormuni Cattle Farm in Berhampur town, on the ground that only hybrid cows bought from that farm could be insured, created further problems for the poor women But Runu Gowda, was not the one to be cowed down by such discriminatory practices In a meeting chaired by the Ganjam Sub-Collector, she, unlike other voiceless *swarozgaris*, fearlessly put forth the group's problems before the authorities The errant veterinarian present there was immediately taken to task and was asked to do the needful A little control over resources, by tapping into the vast reservoirs of hope and enthusiasm, led to a creative and energy-releasing transformation in consciousness and self-perception of this poor woman This, combined with a little help from the pro-poor officials of the state (or the linking social capital), could make a quality of life difference in the condition of the women *swarozgaris* This incident was also an eye-opener to other *swarozgaris*, used to viewing themselves negatively

visits for line department officials was prescribed In the words of the DRDA officials, its role had been reduced to that of a post office, concerned only with consolidating and compiling block-level figures in the prescribed monitoring formats and sending these to the headquarters, that is, to the Panchayti Raj Department in the state secretariat Even the block staff found it difficult to ensure proper and regular monitoring of the scheme Pressure of routine administrative work, chronic staff shortage and poor incentive system were cited as the reasons for perfunctory monitoring Despite attempts to contrast SGSY from the target-oriented IRDP, the block officials admitted that mere fulfilment of annual targets, that is, covering *swarozgaris*, rather than quality nurturing of SHGs and provision of support services to them, had become their main concern

More often than not, exclusive SC and ST groups, be it the Rasakumpa SHG in the Talapatna village of Dharakote block, the Maa Lakshmi SHG in Suramani village of Sorada block or the Dandamari SHG of Lanjia Saura tribes of Bolagada village in Sanakhemundi block, had suffered the most due to inadequate programme monitoring and support services, highlighting the significance of positive external linkages for the success of micro-finance programmes (see Case 5)

Case 5
The Maa Durga WSHG, an 11-member body of Lanjia Saura tribes in the Khemundi Kholo village of T Govindpur panchayat in Sanakhemundi block, after having successfully passed the grading tests, was assisted under SGSY for the integrated dairy and pisciculture activities with a loan of Rs2 0 lakh (including subsidy component of Rs 1 lakh) from Andhra Bank, Podamari The entire loan amount was disbursed to the group and the group was found to have paid back Rs 24,000 Proving the sceptics wrong, the Lanjia Saura tribes had made good cultural adaptation to dairying and they were also doing well in pisciculture in the Panchayat-leased pond The tribal members, earlier dependent on the vagaries of wage labour and minor forest produce collection for their livelihood, were reported to be getting a regular monthly scheme income of more than Rs 700 The group seemed to have received adequate support services including marketing and training from the administration All round development in this hamlet of Lanjia Saura tribes, with the active involvement of the village WSHG Federation was apparent The credit for this must go to the collective effort of the villagers, who were ably led by the energetic and enterprising Sarpanch, Dambaru Mandal (a resident of the village) By virtue of falling in the Mohana constituency, the group and the village also enjoyed political patronage of the powerful local cabinet minister Thus, the bonding and bridging social capital of the Lanjia Saura *swarozgaris*, having been properly harnessed by the politico-administrative set-up (linking social capital), resulted in beneficial outcomes of the state-society synergy

Overall Assessment

While the achievements of the programme fell far short of the optimistic claims of the state, seen in terms of the criteria of increase in and control over incomes and development of collective economic and social activities by *swarozgaris*, it did manage to achieve some success But the study findings question the current complacency regarding the automatic and inevitable benefits of micro-finance targeting of poor women groups even under a generous 'poverty alleviation' paradigm enjoying state support It highlights the complex interrelationship between group-based micro-finance, social capital and state-centred social mobilisation of the poor

The poor delivery mechanism, lack of systematic and meaningful involvement of PRIs and NGOs, sub-critical investments and sectoral composition of scheme activities (dominance of more risky primary and manufacturing over less risky trade and commerce activities) had led to a failure to optimally utilise the unique institutional advantages of SGSY in Ganjam and to achieve sustainable outcomes on the ground Two other factors basically outside the programme's control (see Tendler 1989) – the dispersed nature of the rural population[8] it served, and their location within the economically backward tribal belt of the district – seemed to

have further undermined its chances of success But, more importantly, the programme's failure to tackle the problem of powerlessness of the poor *swarozgaris* through adequate 'social mobilisation' contributed to this outcome

Conclusion

The implementation of SGSY is indicative of the dialectical contradiction inherent in state-society interaction Rural poverty alleviation, which the state seeks to achieve, needs mobilisation of the poor However, both the policy and its implementation tend to undermine the conditions for that Being a product of the neo-liberal policy regime, relying on micro-level 'self-help' (Smiles 1986, de Soto 1989, Hart 2000), SGSY seeks to underplay the conflict and oppositional pressure politics that characterise the relationship between the poor and the state But the realisation of the practical administrative and fiscal limitations of the state (one of the important lessons learnt from the IRDP debacle) has led to forming government-sponsored SHGs or to reaching out to existing SHGs in order to reshape them within the policy parameters by assigning them specific supporting roles in programme implementation SHGs of poor women, co-opted as state allies, are then expected to strengthen social mobilisation from below As administrative adjuncts of the state, SHGs of poor under SGSY could rarely go beyond the state-defined parameters of action Instead of viewing SHGs as 'genuine social intermediaries' with 'transformational' potential (Holvoet 2005), they are treated as little more than financial intermediaries The implementation deficiencies add to the problems The relative absence of embeddedness and complementarity, that is, the absence of a pro-poor and pro-active rural development administration providing critical support services to the *swarozgaris*, resulted in the failure to derive state-society synergy in SGSY implementation The inability to develop positive vertical linkages (linking social capital) on the existing horizontal networks (bonding and bridging social capital) of the poor contributed to ineffective programme performance

While the energy for development may lie within the SHGs of poor rural women, it has to be complemented by broader sets of ideas and organisations The socio-economic, political and even geographical contexts of groups and external linkages, which may operate through state and non-state actors (as they did for the success of the urban poor like the Self-Employed Women's Association in Gujarat or the Working Women's Forum in Tamil Nadu) play an essential role in enabling groups of poor women to become effective agents of development

Notes

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1 The Micro-finance Bill, 2006 refines the concept of micro-finance as the provision of financial assistance to the eligible clients either directly or through group mechanism for small and tiny enterprise, agriculture, allied activities including consumption, up-to an amount not exceeding Rs 50,000 in aggregate and up to Rs 150,000 for housing purpose or such other amounts for the above purpose or such other purposes as specified by the NABARD from time to time

2 The Mission Shakti was launched by the Government of Orissa on 8 March 2001 with the explicit objective of empowering rural women by promoting one lakh new WSHGs by 2005 and strengthening the existing ones in the state Each of the thirty districts in the state was given targets for forming WSHGs under the programme There are high-powered committees like the State-level Co-ordination Committee headed by the Chief Minister, the State-level Executive Committee under the Secretary, Women and Child Development Department, and the State-level Bankers Committee and District-level Co-ordination and Executive Committees to ensure its success

3 The district of Ganjam was purposively selected on the basis of the following criteria (a) The district has the largest number of *swarozgaris* covered under SGSY (8,958) as also the largest number of women *swarozgaris* (3,571) assisted during 2000-01 in the state, constituting 40 per cent of the district total, against the state average of 25 per cent (see Table1) (GOO 2002a) Apparently one of the largest investments under SGSY was also made in Ganjam during 2000-01 (Rs 1882 08 lakhs - Rs 621 22 lakhs subsidy + Rs 1260 86 lakhs credit) (b) The district combines features of both the SBL and the MFI approaches in SGSY implementation (c) It is one of the five districts in the state identified under the 'Backward Districts Initiatives' of the Rastriya Shram Vikas Yojana of the Government of India

4 MASS, a body under the Societies Registration Act, 1860 in the Women and Child Development Department of the Government of Orissa, seeks to bring under one banner the WSHGs promoted in the non-NGO sector in each block of Ganjam district, by facilitating their linkage with banks and public welfare/poverty alleviation schemes after conducting prescribed grading tests, capacity-building, etc The corpus of MASS is raised from member SHG subscriptions, government grant-in-aid and bank borrowings While banks finance MASS at an annual interest rate of 9-10 per cent, MASS finances member SHGs at 12 per cent The executive body of B-MASS comprises fourteen members (eleven elected SHG representatives from the governing body and three nominated officials, that is, the BDO, CDPO and the banker) The executive body of D-MASS, with mainly advisory and monitoring functions, consists of the District Magistrate (Chairman), the CDPO (Member Secretary), and seven elected B-MASS Presidents

5 Under the Agency Model, MFIs (like MASS in Ganjam) can provide both non-financial and financial services including the identification of borrower, processing and submission of applications to banks, acting as 'pass through' agents for disbursal of small value credit, recovery of principal, collection of interest, sale of micro insurance (MASS started micro-insurance during 2004-05 for its members in the

form of the Women Welfare Fund), providing First Loan Default Guarantee, etc The banks appear to have positive experience under this model as MFIs have helped them overcome the problem of outreach in rural areas and have also reduced their transaction cost The larger MFIs, seeking to operate independently of banks, belong to the Bulk Lending (Equity Participation) Model, whereby they can access funds in the form of subordinated debts, equity or quasi-equity from agencies, such as, the Rashtriya Mahila Kosh, the SIDBI Foundation for Micro-Credit (SFMC), the Micro-Finance Development and Equity Fund, etc

6 DSMS works under a Chief Executive, who is also given the status of Ex-officio Additional Project Director (Marketing), DRDA The District Collector serves as the Chairperson of DSMS, and the Project Director, DRDA acts as its Vice-Chairperson ORMAS functions under the over-all administrative control of the Panchayati Raj Department of the Government of Orissa

7 Out of the twenty-two blocks in the district, the largest number of women *swarozgaris* were assisted under SGSY in the three selected blocks during 2000-01 Sorada (336), Dharakote (286), and Sanakhemundi (210) (GOO 2002) These blocks, which form a contiguous zone of backwardness bordering the tribal districts of Kondhmal and Gajapati, have some of the largest concentration of SC, ST and the rural poor in the district The percentages of rural BPL population in the three blocks are Sorada (78%), Dharakote (61%), and Sanakhemundi (52%)

8 The Grameen Bank is an exception to this because Bangladesh has the highest rural population density in the world This Bank also has the added advantage of being closely tied to a large economic actor in the capital city of Dhaka, the Bangladesh Central Bank, which increased their connections to the city and the powerful policy and decision makers

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Engaging with Modernity: Need for a Critical Negotiation

D.V. Kumar

Modernity has emerged as a dominant category in social science literature An attempt is made in this paper to make sense of what modernity is and elaborate and interrogate different forms of engagement one could pursue with it One could approach modernity in three different, though not contradictory, ways Similarly, it is possible to think of three distinct forms of engagement which one can pursue with modernity The case for one form of engagement, namely, critical and creative negotiation, is argued

[Keywords hegemony, liberating potential, modernity, progress, reason, reflexivity]

Modernity has had a deeply critical impact on social structures and cultural institutions across the globe When it embarked upon its journey of reaching everywhere, it did have tremendous political and intellectual support behind it Philosophers such as Voltaire, David Hume, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Immanuel Kant, Adam Smith and others were deeply supportive of the Enlightenment Project (in 18th century Europe) which led to the consolidation of modernity Later on, colonialism became the vehicle through which modernity made an inexorable entry into every possible society Without such a solid backing from both political and intellectual sources, it would not have spread the way it did Both in terms of reach and intensity, there are very few phenomena which are comparable to modernity There is hardly any society which has remained immune to the influence of modernity and the degree to which it has impacted different societies is quite profound Modernity, therefore, does demand serious and sustained engagement by the sociologists

Although modernity is said to have begun in the West in about the 15th century, it acquired its distinctive character in the context of the Enlightenment Project in the 18th century (Pathak 1998 17) By the term 'Project' one would get the impression that there was an absolutely coherent and unchallenged set of ideas over which there was complete agreement among philosophers who moved within its framework This is not our position There were different voices within the Project which demanded their space and supremacy However, what is undeniable about the Project is that it does contain a set of distinctive underlying assumptions and expectations which were to guide social life in the years to come Some of these assumptions and expectations such as reason, science, progress, empiricism and secularism, as and when they are realised, were supposed to contribute significantly to the enhancement of human condition by ushering in the era of modernity

Despite the fact that modernity has emerged as one of the most powerful and 'hegemonic' categories, it remains deeply contested How do we look at modernity? How do we engage ourselves with it? What are the tensions and challenges that one would experience in different forms of engagement? These are some of the principal questions we would be trying to explore in this paper

Different Ways of Looking at Modernity

There are three ways, which are different if not contradictory to one another, in which one can look at modernity as a philosophical *idea*, as a form of *society*, and as an *experience* (Callinicos 1999 297) As an idea, it represents a radical rupture with the past It privileges progress, science, optimism and universality It critiques superstitions, blind faiths and pessimism It encourages us to adopt alternative ways of looking at the world and its possibilities Whereas in the past, the idea of God reigned supreme, with the emergence of modernity the idea of reason became dominant Through the instrument of reason, it is possible to understand and explain the world Invariable laws of nature, it is contended, are possible to formulate Reason becomes the dominant mode of discourse Modernity was conceived as the celebration of objective and instrumental reason (Kumar 2006 2) It would strike at the very structure of tyrannical practices and superstitions Kant, one of the celebrated advocates of modernity and its institutions, says, 'do not wrest from reason that which makes it the highest good on earth, that is, the prerogative of being the ultimate touchstone of truth' (1949/1788 305) It no longer looks to the past for its legitimacy and justification It looks to the future and creates its own self-justification As Jurgen Habermas

argues, 'modernity can and will no longer borrow the criterion by which it takes its orientation from the models supplied by another epoch it has to create its own normativity out of itself' (1987 7) The idea of modernity is irretrievably linked to the idea of progress and science With modernity, progress is inevitable Human advancement will continue unabated Hunger, ignorance and superstition, which were the pervasive and dominant realities in the past, will slowly but surely disappear Such is the unbounded optimism that the idea of modernity generated

Secondly, modernity can also be looked at as a form of society which would be characterised by distinctive economic, political and social characteristics Economically, there would be increasing mechanisation of production (use of inanimate sources of energy) (Levy 1966), a shift from agriculture to industry, growth of urbanisation as workers need to move from place to place where industries are located, growth of cash economy, consolidation of free market economy and monopoly capitalism, etc Politically, there would be increasing decentralisation, democratisation, and greater participation of people in the decision-making process, growth of bureaucracy, and expansion of welfare policies due to public pressure In the social sphere, a modern society has come to be associated with important shifts in values and institutional devices In terms of value orientations, as Talcott Parsons (1964 339-57) argues, there would be a shift from particularism to universalism, ascription to achievement, functional diffuseness to functional specificity, and collective-orientation to self-orientation The former are characteristic of traditional societies and the latter, of modern societies For example, he regards the Australian aboriginal society as primitive characterised as it was by value orientations such as collective-orientation, ascription, etc , and at the other end of the evolutionary scale are Western Europe, the USA and the then Soviet Union which are considered modern as the value orientations of self-orientation, achievement, etc are dominant there However, it needs to be pointed out here that Parsons does not regard the modern society as the one which is completely and exclusively characterised by the value orientations of universalism, achievement, functional specificity and self-orientation But these value orientations are certainly more dominant In terms of institutional devices, he says that market, money and bureaucracy are the most important institutional universals found in a modern society Structural differentiation and functional specialisation are pervasive features of any modern society

Thirdly, modernity can also be looked at as an experience, an experience which is full of contradictions On the one hand, it promises many things progress, advancement, removal of ignorance, power, joy, etc On the other hand, it seeks to destroy everything we have and are

known by It introduces an element of uncertainty, risk and confusion Marshall Berman has put it succinctly

> There is a mode of vital experience – experience of space and time, of the self and others, of life's possibilities and perils – that is shared by men and women all over the world today I will call this body of experience 'modernity' To be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world-and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know and everything we are Modern environments and experiences cut across all boundaries of geography and ethnicity, of class and nationality, of religion and ideology in this sense modernity can be said to unite all mankind But it is a paradoxical unity, a unity of disunity it pushes us into a maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal, of struggle and contradiction, of ambiguity and anguish To be modern is to be part of a universe in which, as Marx said, 'all that is solid melts into air (1982 15)

Thus, as one can see, there are different, if not contradictory, ways of looking at modernity Each way of looking at modernity would make us sensitive to one aspect of modernity The first one would highlight the philosophical aspects of modernity The second one would enable us to look at the empirical manifestations of modernity The third one would provide us with a profound account of the socio-psychological aspects of modernity There has been rich sociological literature on the above aspects by Indian scholars (see, for example, Singh 1973, Nandy 1994, Gupta 2000, Pathak 2006), and a discussion of this literature is beyond the scope this paper

Forms of Engagement

As stated at the outset, the compelling thing about modernity is that it demands serious engagement by sociologists One can not remain immune to the deeply consequential aspects of modernity What are the different forms in which we engage ourselves with modernity? Broadly one can identify three forms They are (i) celebration and eulogisation of modernity, (ii) negation and rejection of modernity (either in its present form or complete rejection of the epistemology on which it is based), and (iii) critical and creative negotiation with modernity The second form of engagement, that is, rejection of modernity, may mistakenly be viewed as no form of engagement at all It is our considered view that the very act of rejection presupposes certain kind of engagement, though in a negative way

Celebration of Modernity

One way of engaging with modernity is to celebrate it This involves eulogising it, looking at it as a great possibility Exploration of this possibility and its concretisation would completely change the way we live and the way we look at the world With modernity, life will increasingly become orderly and free from the kind of problems which characterised the world Poverty, superstition and blind beliefs will give way to knowledge, prosperity and rational outlook Control over nature, which can be used as a tremendous resource, will enhance our standard of life and lead to general prosperity By privileging reason, it would increasingly become possible for us to understand and explain the world through invariable laws of nature

Modernity will do away with the constraints imposed by tradition, customs, beliefs and feelings Reason will sweep away social and political beliefs and forms of organisation which are not based upon scientific proofs Life is no longer ruled by the notion of God or divine power It is no longer necessary to submit to the will of a Supreme Being Such a celebratory tone can be noticed in the writings of philosophers of Enlightenment For example, Rousseau who remained a steadfast supporter of modernity and its emancipatory potential because of its privileging of rationality was constantly driven by a desire to struggles against the obstacles that obscure knowledge and communication (cited in Touraine 1995 17) To resolve conflicts among individuals, social contract comes into being Social contract is nothing but the embodiment of reason He does not see divine revelation as the organising principle behind society and replaces it with reason The education of an individual must be such that it must free him from the narrow and irrational vision forced upon him by his family and his own passion It must expose him to rational knowledge and prepare him to be part of a society which emphasises reason It must enable him to organise his life on the basis of rational principles which the discourse of modernity constantly stresses

The philosophical thought of Kant and Hegel too can be characterised as the celebration of reason and modernity (Habermas 1987, Touraine 1995) The modernisation theory propounded since the 1950s and 1960s is nothing but an undiluted acceptance of modernity and its institutions (Lerner 1958, Hoselitz 1960, Parsons 1964, Black 1966, Levy 1966, Moore 1967, Stephenson 1968, Smelser 1969) Historically, until the period after the World War II, very little interest was shown in the changes occurring in different societies (Pandey 1988 7) The study of social changes assumed great significance in the 1950s and 1960s

when new nations came into existence and the colonial empire gradually faded Interest began to be shown on the nations as to how they intended to fulfil the massive expectations of their peoples and with what institutional devices Funds began to be allocated generously for conducting studies

Modernisation became the main instrument through which massive changes can be initiated Problems of poverty, disease, ignorance, poor infrastructural facilities can only be removed by undertaking the process of modernisation initiated in the West Though it was viewed by some as a hegemonic device employed by the West to push through its own agenda of neo-colonialism, it was being celebrated as the panacea for all the evils afflicting societies in general in Asia, Africa and Latin America Modernisation theories propounded in the 1950s and 1960s reflected the dominant mood during that time, which was that of privileging modernisation and the massive changes that accompanied it

Persistent perusal of the process of modernisation would enable the 'underdeveloped' societies to reach the level of prosperity that is currently seen in the West It is only in the interests of these societies that they adopt the value orientations, institutional devices and structural aspects that are present in the advanced and industrial societies What has given impetus to this is the process of globalisation that has entrenched itself Globalisation is the logical extension of modernity It only seeks to advance further the ideas of reason, progress, universality and optimism Among the people mentioned above, there are not many who would like to problematise the very idea of modernity and engage with the pathological forms it assumes when left to itself

Negation/Rejection of Modernity

The second form of engagement that is pursued is that of negating modernity and its institutions There have been extremely powerful voices which have positioned themselves in opposition to modernity and whatever it stood for Such voices can be broadly divided into critical theory and postmodern theory The critical theory emerged out of the collective efforts of all those associated with what came to be known as the Frankfurt School (established in the 1920s in Germany) Though there were differences among the critical theorists on several issues, what united them was a desire to critically engage with issues of the day One of them certainly was modernity and its pathological dimensions They launched an extremely powerful and scathing critique of modernity Modernity led to the growth of technological rationality (instrumental rationality), consumer culture, commodification and instrumentalisation

of social relations and abstract and impersonal relations Reason instead of becoming an instrument of liberation and emancipation has, in fact, become an instrument of oppression and hegemony The tendency to homogenise and degrade diversities is an offshoot of modern sensibilities From Theodore Adorno to Max Horkehimer to Herbert Marcuse we see the growing disenchantment with modernity

The two world wars, the emergence of fascist regimes, the sharpening of socioeconomic inequalities, the continuous ecological destruction that is being inflicted are all outcomes of a project that has a scant regard for human lives and cultural sensibilities guided as it is by dehumanising and hegemonising technological rationality There is certain degree of erosion of criticality and creativity leading to a pronounced inability to deal with issues of exploitation, oppression and discrimination For example, one of the best-known theorists of the Frankfurt School, Marcuse (1972), talking about an important outcome of modernity, that is, consumer culture, would argue that the growth of consumer culture has clearly dented revolutionary potential and social critique People are seduced by commodities and comfort They are content in their material affluence and happy to wallow in the false freedoms provided by leisure and sexual opportunities He said that subjectivities had been shaped by the needs of the capitalistic system The 'one-dimensional man' is a shallow person living an illusory life, voluntarily seeking to fulfil false needs He writes, 'Most of the prevailing needs to relax, have fun, to behave and consume in accordance with the advertisements, to love and hate what others love and hate, belong to this category of false needs' (*ibid*, 19)

Needless to repeat, the growing consumer culture engendered by capitalist modernisation has a lot to do with this Marcuse became extremely popular among students across different university campuses for his call for an authentic and, non-repressive sexuality as a perfect antidote to alienation under capitalist modernisation

While critical theorists based their critique of modernity on the pathological form it has assumed – its excessive use of technological rationality, the growth of commodification and instrumentalisation of social relations and consumer culture etc , post-modernists rejected the very epistemology on which it is based The essential components of the epistemology of modernity are science, objectivity, certainty, progress and truth The postmodernists' engagement with modernity is based on the rejection of the following Enlightenment tenets (McLennan 1992 330)

a The view that our knowledge of society, like society itself, is holistic, cumulative and broadly progressive in character
b That we can attain rational knowledge of society
c That such knowledge is universal and thus objective
d That sociological knowledge is both different from, and superior to, distorted forms of thought, such as ideology, religion, common sense, superstition and prejudice
e That social scientific knowledge once validated and acted upon can lead to mental liberation and social betterment among humanity generally

A closer look at the above tenets would tell us that the Enlightenment Project seeks to attain 'objective' and 'impartial' knowledge which is called science and is superior to what are called 'narratives' which are essentially stories or fables invented in order to give meaning and significance to our lives The epistemology on which modernity is based takes the position that stories or tales do not provide real or true knowledge and their main function is to provide only existential or ideological comforts to us as we go through life Stories and fables do not enable us to acquire objective, scientific and universal knowledge about the social reality Their relevance is limited to local, personal and social contexts In fact, they have the status of myths

One can find a lucid rejection of the above in Jean-François Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition* (1984) Lyotard reacts sharply to such an understanding of Enlightenment by saying that its view of pure and true knowledge is itself a grand myth One cannot possibly come across a more powerful and hegemonic myth that that of scientific or objective knowledge Scientific and objective knowledge are justified in the name of progress and emancipation which are, as he would argue meta-narratives One would not give much credence to such narratives after one has seen events like the world wars, the ecological destruction, the growing inequalities and the frustration among the youth

The ideas of certainty, objectivity, truth, history, optimism and progress, which modernity tried to privilege, have been subjected to a scathing critique Instead, it is argued that we should adopt 'incredulity towards meta-narratives', thus privileging uncertainty, fragmentation, subjectivity, difference, relativism and pessimism Knowledge which is the exclusive preserve of philosophers, scholars and scientists needs to be taken out of their hold and subjected to a deconstructive reading, thereby destroying the hegemonic construction of knowledge itself

Critical and Creative Negotiation with Modernity

The third way of engaging oneself with modernity is to negotiate with it in a critical and self-reflexive way Here the idea is not to eulogise it or

reject it in an unproblematic way, but look at not only the possibilities and opportunities it affords but also examine the pathologies, paradoxes, ambiguities and contradictions that it contains The kind of engagement starts with the premise that modernity does have enormous potential in changing the course of human history and the way we imagine the world and actualise it One indisputable thing about modernity is that it has made human life completely different from what it was before, characterised as it was by helpless submission to Divine Power There was an implicit acceptance of an inability to do anything about the world (on one's own) which was full of ignorance, superstitions and blind faith One had no choice but to succumb to the vagaries of nature Nature would behave the way the Divine Power ordered it to Modernity has changed that It has given us the power not only to understand the world and the way we live but also the power to change it in a way which will benefit all of us

At the same time, however, it has acquired certain pathologies For one it has become hegemonic The only way of understanding the world, it is repeated *ad infinitum*, is through the instrument of reason All other ways of looking and understanding the societies, cultures, processes and institutions are denigrated Reason has become an instrument of oppression Feelings, faith and folktales, which are the alternative ways of understanding the world, have sought to be undermined

Apart from the above, it has led to certain other pathological tendencies which need to be understood and grappled with Otherwise, what is a great possibility will be turned into an unmitigated disaster Nuclear wars, ecological destruction in the name of development, sharpening of socioeconomic inequalities. and growing sense of alienation and anomie are some of the tendencies which have been recognised and have troubled the minds of outstanding thinkers

Such a critical appreciation of modernity could be noticed in the writings of celebrated sociologists such as Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim and Max Weber, and more recently in those of Habermas, Anthony Giddens and Alan Touraine Although Marx, Durkheim and Weber broadly moved within the framework of Enlightenment and of modernity and are deeply appreciative of the 'functional' aspects of modernity and its institutions, they also provided a powerful critique of modernity They eulogised and critiqued almost in the same breath For example, as Berman (1982) says, the *Communist Manifesto* can also be read as the 'Modern Manifesto' Terms like 'modern industry', 'modern worker', 'modern state power', and 'modern productive forces' appear many times It may be argued that the *Communist Manifesto* is the first major socio-political affirmation of modernity Marx was deeply conscious of

liberating and modernising potential of science It would lead to the development of productive forces At the same time, he spoke of alienation – a pathological socioeconomic condition in which workers feel alienated from themselves, from others, from products and finally from the productive process itself Capitalism (which can be viewed as an offshoot of modernity) and private property distort human relations, deprive man of his creativity, the joy in his work and cripple his relationship with nature, women, community and the larger world (cited in Pathak 1998 21) Marx provided a scathing critique of capitalist institutions and their functions

Durkheim (1964) noted the historical significance of transition from societies characterised by 'mechanical solidarity' to those characterised by 'organic solidarity' In the former, solidarity is based on likeness People differ least in terms of their values, likes, dislikes, attitudes etc 'Collective conscience' embraces greater part of individual conscience People are not free to pursue their own interests The hold of collective conscience, however, begins to weaken when societies move towards a state of organic solidarity which is caused by an increase in volume and material density of society Individual conscience begins to flourish which itself is a greater emancipatory and liberating development

Although he was appreciative of the liberating potential of modernity, he also articulated his sense of discomfort and unease with what this can produce, that is, anomie Anomie is not a state of normlessness, as it is popularly misunderstood It is a state where conformity to norms is considerably weakened because of raid economic and social changes There is a breakdown of moral order, a negative aspect of modernity Thus, he calls for strengthening of moral community so that societies do not breakdown because of the unstoppable march of modernity

Weber too spoke of the great potential of rationalisation (an essential modern attribute), its institutional manifestation of bureaucracy, and at the same time referred to the growing disenchantment There is a loss of meaning caused by the process of disenchantment which itself is a product of modernity

Giddens (1990 46-53), one of the most celebrated and influential thinkers on modernity and its institutions, is severely critical of post-modernist thinkers and their rejection of whatever modernity stands for its certainty, optimism, progress and idea of history He rejects the idea that no systematic knowledge of human beings or trends of social development is possible If it were so, even postmodernists would not be able to write whatever they were writing What postmodernists are talking about today, Friedrich Nietzsche dwelt upon it a century ago

when something called postmodern sensibilities did not exist This only goes to show that the critique of modernity was part of modernity itself and its capacity to deal with multiple and conflicting perspectives It is part of the growing radicalisation of modernity which postmodernists are talking about The critique of certainty is inherent in modernity itself There is no such thing as knowledge in conditions of high modernity Knowledge becomes hypothesis

Modernity is regarded as consisting of those institutions and modes of behaviour which first appeared in post-feudal Europe but have increasingly become world-historical in impact The central institutional features encompassing modernity are industrialism (social relations implied in the widespread use of material power and machinery in production processes), capitalism (a system of commodity production), surveillance (supervisory control of subject populations) and nation-state The institutions mentioned above and which are associated with modernity are qualitatively different from those existing before them in the sense that they are essentially reflexive and dynamic entities The pace of change is much faster The scope of change is wider As Giddens (1991) argues, the profoundness with which it affects pre-existing social practices and modes of behaviour is much greater

As stated earlier, modernity here is conceived of as a highly dynamic system What lends dynamism to modernity are three essential elements they are separation of time and space, disembedding of social relations, and reflexivity (*ibid* 18) What is distinctive about pre-modern cultures is that they had their own method of reckoning time, and time and space were necessarily connected through the situatedness of place The separation of time and space in a modern setting provides a basis for the recombination of social relations with reference to the particularity of time, which is quite essential for the modern-day organisations

Modern social organisations presume the precise coordination of the actions of many human beings physically absent from one another (*ibid*) The second element of disembedding of social relations refers to the 'lifting out' social relations from local contexts and their re-articulation across indefinite tracts of time-space (*ibid*) This is the key to the tremendous acceleration in time-space distanciation which modernity introduces The third element which modernity is associated with is reflexivity which is susceptibility of most aspects of social activities and material relations with nature, to chronic revision in the light of new information and knowledge (*ibid*) Reflexivity is an integral part of social sciences which do not simply accumulate knowledge in the way in which the natural sciences do

Yet Giddens is acutely aware of some of the challenges associated with modernity A modern society is essentially a risk society In view of the gradual weakening of traditional sources of support, the element of risk becomes that much greater Under conditions of modernity, the future is continually drawn into the present by means of the reflexive organisation of knowledge environment (*ibid* 3) Generation of new risks, unknown in the past, is a real danger Coupled with the element of risk is the element of personal meaninglessness, a feeling that life has nothing much to contribute, which becomes a psychic problem in circumstances of late modernity Giddens is also opposed to all kinds of 'foundationalism' promoted in the name of modernity 'Foundationalism' refers to the belief that it is possible to acquire certain knowledge about the society which is beyond all kinds of doubts and questions Modernity, in the true sense of the term, would not approve of such optimism, as reflexivity and self-doubt are an organic part of modernity itself There is a need to deepen such reflexivity which will lead to a heightened process of radicalisation of modernity Modernity should be capable of coming to terms with its own reflexivity (Pathak 1998 29)

There are equally powerful voices which are appreciative of the liberating potential of modernity and at the same time express a sense of discomfiture with certain pathological forms it has assumed One such voice is that of Habermas (1985, 1987) Coming to the defence of modernity against the critique of Enlightenment by post-modernity, Habermas asserts that it has a great emancipatory and conscience-raising role to play Whatever it wanted to achieve, it could not achieve because its potential has not been sufficiently realised That is why he speaks in terms of the unfinished project of modernity The need is to understand and realise its massive potential

However, there lies a challenge in encountering modernity The challenge is to fight the technological rationality that modernity has come to be associated with Modernity has been reduced to be nothing more than instrumental rationality Technological rationality is divorced from substantive values such as equality, democracy, human solidarity etc It leads to bureaucratisation and commodification It leads to a loss of meaning and sense of being uprooted from those values which give sustenance to human life

How to rescue modernity from its obsession with instrumental/ technological rationality and strive for a fuller realisation of its emancipatory potential, is the challenge we must accept This is where Habermas' is theory of communicative rationality becomes pertinent (1984) This consists of the undistorted activities of people attempting in a genuine way to attain clear mutual understanding It is only by engaging

in an authentic, dialogical and reciprocal communication that modernity can ensure joy, happiness, emancipation and freedom

Poststructuralist thinkers such as Michel Foucault would, however, question whether the Enlightenment Project can, or indeed should be salvaged at all Others have pointed to the utopian aspects of Habermas' theory For example, he talks about authentic and dialogical communication without referring to the institutional forms such as diverse media, grass-roots social movements, etc that are required to support such a system of communication

Talking about such institutional forms, Touraine (1995) refers to one of such forms That is the terrain of social movement Social movement is the terrain where one can bring 'Reason' and 'Subject' together Touraine subjected modernity to a scathing critique without abandoning the realisation of the efficacy of instrumental reason or the liberating power of critical thought and individualism His main argument is that modernity introduced a dualism between reason and subject, rationalisation and subjectivation, privileging the former over the latter Reason has begun to be reified and put on a pedestal Subject has been relegated to the background His attempt is to introduce a dialogue between the two In his own words, 'without Reason, the Subject is trapped into an obsession with identity Without the Subject, Reason becomes an instrument of might In this century, we have seen both the dictatorship of Reason and totalitarian perversion of the subject Is it not possible that they begin to speak to each other and to learn to live together?' (*ibid* 6) He seeks to extricate modernity from a historical tradition which has reduced it to rationalisation and to introduce the theme of the personal subject and subjectivation (*ibid*) He speaks of a compelling need to bring Reason and Subject together and the agent of such a union is the social movement or in other words the transformation of the personal and collective defence of the Subject into a collective action directed against power, which subordinates reason to its own interests (*ibid* 374)

Conclusion

The most meaningful form of engagement with modernity would be that of critical and creative engagement An uncritical and blind celebration of modernity, as modernisation theories of 1960s and 1970s tended to do, would not enable us to appreciate the problems, paradoxes and tensions that are associated with modernity Its excessive stress or, in fact, reification of reason, technological rationality, commodification and instrumentalisation of social relations, its tendency to homogenise, and its discrediting of the local, personal and 'myths' needs to be critiqued

At the same time, the total pessimism exhibited by some of the critical theorists and almost all the postmodernists while engaging with modernity is highly problematical Modernity, despite the pathological forms it assumes when not handled properly, does indeed speak a different language, a language which is full of optimism and liberating potential It was modernity which liberated us from the tyranny of tradition and superstition and tried to create a dialogic space It enhanced and deepened the sphere of reflexivity, as Giddens would argue

We need to be conscious of modernity, its possibilities and its reflexivity, and at the same time remain alert and sensitive to its hegemonic, de-humanising and homogenising logic and potential This is precisely the kind of engagement which could usefully be pursued

Notes

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1 Some of the important writings on modernity/modernisation by Indian scholars include Yogendra Singh's *Modernisation of Indian Tradition* (1973), Ashis Nandy's *The Intimate Enemy Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism* (1994), Dipankar Gupta's *Mistaken Modernity India between Worlds* (2000), and Avijit Pathak's *Modernity, Globalisation and Identity Towards a Reflexive Quest* (2006) The treatment of such rich literature was beyond the scope of this paper and would have to be undertaken in a separate article

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Civil Society and the Calling of Self-Development

Ananta Kumar Giri

There is an epochal need for sociology to enter into planetary conversations to overcome what Ulrich Beck calls the NATO-like fire power of western sociology, and the theme of civil society can be a very promising inaugural starting point for such a transcivilisational dialogue Civil society, like much social theory, suffers from an a priori binding to what can be called a post-traditional telos which, in fact, has been turned into a post-traditional theology But dialogue with Indian history, society and social theory can help us realise that the project of civil society is not just modernistic Civil society is also not only a space for struggle for empowerment, it is also a space for self-realisation, self-development and social transformation Civil society is not only a space for public deliberation, it is also a space for listening, cultivation of silence and appropriate subjectivity transcending the polarity between the 'private' and the 'public'

[Keywords civil society, multiple modernities, ontological epistemology of participation, self-development]

If we divide the history of mankind into five periods, that is, the prehistoric, ancient, medieval, modern and post-modern, one can say that the history of civil society begins only when the institution of the sacred or the divine kingship begins to dissolve into two differentiated institutions at the dawn of the ancient, or at the very latest the medieval, period out of the past [ ]

Even if this civil society was indeed the 'child of the modern world,' still it is the Christian society and its early modern reform that we may also have to consider, and not only the bourgeois society of modern capitalism By this wider definition, the modern civil society was established or revived in Britain at any rate by the struggle of the Nonconformists, the new Christians, who together severed connection with the established Church of England when it

accepted royal supremacy at the time of the Reformation [ ] The new Christians wanted instead what we may call salvation through religion in society, with pluralist freedom of conscience and worship for all

– J P S Uberoi (2003 115 and 120)

There are groups as well as individuals all over the world who are increasingly conscious of their creative potentiality and wish to realise their aspirations Contemporary history is about these multiple selves engaged in dynamic struggles Some may be forward looking and emancipative while others may be regressive and irrational But the overwhelming trend is likely to be one that demands respect for each self

– Manoranjan Mohanty (2002 1)

The Problem

It is Jurgen Habermas (1981) who, quite some time ago, had challenged us that now we need a new philosophy of science which is not scientistic It is worth asking Habermas and all of us sociologists, for whom sociological engagement is nothing more than an elaboration of the agenda of modernity, whether we need an understanding of and relationship with modernity which is not modernistic This inquiry is at the core of understanding paths of civil society and experiments with modernities not only in India but also in Europe, East Asia, Africa, Latin America and around the world The concepts of 'civil society' and 'modernity' suffer from a profound modernistic bias and they are part of the post-traditional telos of modernistic sociological theorising,[1] though the recent discourse of multiple modernities initiated by S N Eisenstadt (cf Sachsenmaier *et al* 2002) suggests some new possibilities as the universalistic modernity of Habermas suffers from a modernistic bias when it comes to understanding tradition [2]

Prefiguring my argument, I wish to submit that appreciating the significance of Indian modernities from Buddha to Gandhi challenges us to understand the relationship between modernity and tradition, state and society, religion and secularism in a new way through a multi-valued logic of autonomy and interpenetration rather than through the dualistic logic of modernity Such a dualistic logic has impoverished our understanding of civil society and modernity in the West itself what to speak of illuminating our historical paths and tryst with modernities in India

The subject of Indian modernities is quite vast and here I just wish to state that Indian modernities have emerged out of processes of criticism,

creativity and struggles through history – as in the revolt of Buddha, the rise of Upanishadic spirituality, Bhakti movements in medieval India, movement for a new renaissance in the 19th century, and the multi-dimensional anti-colonial and post-colonial struggles for freedom [3] Tryst with modernities in India have involved a transformative dialogue between reason and tradition, tradition and modernity, and rationality and spirituality which has shaped their paths, contents and visions These modernities have generated their own public spaces of coming together, dialogues and public deliberations which bear parallels to what we speak of civil society in the modern West

Civil society is not only an epistemic project, it is also an ontological project, in fact it is a project of ontological epistemology of participation going beyond the modernistic privileging of epistemology and dualism between ontology and epistemology Taking inspiration from Bhakti movements, Kabir, Nanak, Mira Bai, Sri Aurobindo, and Gandhi, we can realise that the significance of Indian modernities lies in bringing to the fore strivings for multi-dimensional self-development where self-transformation contributes to world transformation and where an aesthetics and ethics of servanthood is an important mark of being modern rather than the will to power

But such an open-ended approach to civil society and paths of Indian modernities seems to be missing from certain dominant sociological theorising in India For scholars such as André Béteille (2001) and Dipankar Gupta (1997), civil society is a modernist category of thought and practice guaranteed by state Béteille writes

> I will not try to give a definition of civil society but instead sketch out the context in which it may be meaningfully described While doing so, I would like to repeat that civil society is a feature of the modern world, and it will serve little purpose to look for alternative forms of it in the medieval or ancient world (2001 294)

For Dipankar Gupta, ' if tradition is allowed to gain the upper hand then it is not civil society and with it the concomitant growth of freedom that develops' (1997 141) In discussing the potential for formation of civil society that the social mobilisation of Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) of Mahendra Singh Tikait of Uttar Pradesh, Gupta says 'When it comes to the laudable objective of curbing liquor and drug addiction, here too methods are traditional and repressive Even if some one gives some one the legitimate contract to vend liquor, the outlet should be forcibly closed' (*ibid* 145) But Gupta does not look into the repressive apparatus of the state itself in flooding villages with liquor While talking about Tikait, Gupta writes ' many of his followers have told me that

on several occasions the BKU chief leaves a meeting and goes to his prayer room where he is not to be disturbed' (*ibid* 60) But he does not ask what significance prayer has in this movement leader's personal life as well as in his conduct in the public sphere Such a derisive attitude is an instance of a modernistic bias and is disdainful towards tradition Understanding civil society and paths of modernities in India challenges us to overcome this

Towards a Multi-Dimensional and Multi-Valued Understanding of Civil Society

We need a multi-dimensional understanding of and realisation of the sphere of civil society and its multiple activities For this, we need to overcome the dualism between tradition and modernity, right and good (Habermas 1990), civil society and good society (Béteille 2001), and institutionalisation and mobilisation I suggest that the field of civil society consists of an autonomous space, but interpenetrated by overlapping and interpenetrative circles of society, religion, state, market, social movements/voluntary organisations and self Civil society is not only a space of 'mediating institutions' (Béteille 2001) but also of mobilisation, where mobilisation refers not only to socio-political mobilisations but also socio-spiritual mobilisations including reflective mobilisation of self (Giri 2004) [4] In the same vein, state and civil society are not to be conflated with each other Society and civil society are not coterminous – civil society refers to that conscious and mobilised aspect of society which strives to create a space of critical self-reflections and public deliberations Despite contentions and struggles, state and civil society are related again in a logic of autonomy and interpenetration and, here, social movements, different mediating institutions, and voluntary organisations play an important role Actors from market such as corporate leaders and other market leaders contribute to the resource base of civil society Insofar as the relationship between religion and civil society is concerned, one great challenge is to overcome the dualism of religion and secularism While, for Béteille (2001), civil society is mainly a secular space, for Uberoi (1996) and Oommen (2001a), civil society is a space where religious associations and critical spiritual movements are also at work [5] Finally, civil society is also a space of work of self, in fact, self is an actor in all the intersecting and interpenetrating dimensions of civil society – society, state, market and religion The quality of work of self and its mobilisation in civil society and its above intersecting dimensions determines the quality of civil society

Critical spiritual movements such as Bhakti movement in Indian history have been important actors in articulating paths of Indian modernities and generating a space of autonomy, self-realisation, social transformation and world transformation Bhakti movements created a new social space of caste and to some extent gender equality and they embodied inter-religious dialogue For Chittaranjan Das (1997), the Sant tradition is a product of creative and transformative dialogue and encounter between Hinduism and Islam [6] The participants of Sant tradition and Bhakti movement challenged people to go beyond accepted boundaries and generate a new space of togetherness [7] The leaders of Bhakti movement wrote in people's language, not in Sanskrit Their literature has been one of love, protest and affirmation, and for understanding paths of modernities in India, we need to understand the public sphere of creativity in language, religion and society that the Bhakti movement created This is not possible as long as we are bounded to an *a priori* dualistic logic of modernity and civil society which puts religion and civil society in two separate boxes

Such an approach to civil society has a wider global significance. for example, understanding the relationship between Islam and civil society As Nikamura Mitsuo writes urging us to take Ernest Gellner's views on the impossibility of civil society and Islam only with a pinch of salt

> for centuries Islamic civilisations have developed their own versions of civility and civil society which are different from the West These have included the independence of Muslim communities (*ummah*) from the state under the spiritual leadership of the *ulama* (Islamic scholars), rule of law to protect personal life and property, religious and ethnic pluralism, consultative and consensus methods of decision-making In short, there has been civility and public sphere in Islamic world in its own ways including mechanism to control the arbitrariness of state power and to guarantee the autonomy of diversified associational life (Mitsuo 2001 5)

According to Madjid, 'the notion of civil society or civilised society coined in the constitution of Medina by Prophet Muhammed makes a genuine part of the common heritage of mankind' (quoted in *ibid* 5) Giving the examples of voluntary organisations and political movements such as Nahdaltul Ulama and Muhamadiya, Mitsuo urges us to understand the religious resources for Muslim voluntarism in Indonesia In his work on civil Islam in Indonesia, Robert Hefner (1998) also urges us to understand its role in democratisation of politics and society in Indonesia But Hefner makes a larger point that calls for consideration from those of us who are bonded to a 'post-traditional telos'

> Viewed from the ground of everyday practice rather than the dizzying height of official canons, the normative diversity of traditional societies is far greater than most sociological models imply As in China, Romania, and Islamic Indonesia, there are always 'underdeveloped possibilities' – values and practices that hover closer to the social ground and carry unamplified possibilities These low-lying precedents may not appear in high-flying discourse Nevertheless, they are in some sense 'available' for engagement and reflection, even if they have long been overlooked in public formulations Under conditions of cultural globalisation or cross-regional transfer, some legal actors may seize on exogamous idioms to legitimate and elevate principles of social action (such as equality, participation etc) already present in social life, if in an underdeveloped, subordinated, or politically bracketed manner (1998 20)

Here Hefner may have to consider that there are underdeveloped possibilities not only in so-called traditional societies, but also in so-called modern societies As there is underdeveloped possibility for participatory politics in the so-called traditional societies, there are underdeveloped possibilities for reflective mobilisation of self in contemporary modern and post-modern societies as well

While civil society and reflective mobilisations of self have manifested themselves in varieties of societies some of the unique features of their manifestation must not be lost sight of This calls for a non-judgmental global comparative engagement with various manifestations of civil society, reflective mobilisations of self and spiritual movements in societies and histories In India, socio-religious and socio-spiritual movements such as Bhakti movement generated new spaces of self and societal realisation, but they did not offer a direct political confrontation of governing regimes In India, public spheres and civil societies have not manifested themselves primarily in political terms, though in the public sphere itself participants had access to political rulers [8] For Eisenstadt (2005), this contrasts with the Islamic public sphere which was driven by a primacy of the political In Islamic public spheres and civil societies, a notion of political community was quite at the centre, but this community, though autonomous, was still much more tightly controlled by the ruling political formation compared to the case of state and civil society in the modern West What is striking is that, though in Islamic civil society political community and its autonomy was a key concern, in actual terms, in India, without sharing this key preoccupation with the political, people had a 'relatively widespread access to the political arena' (*ibid* 21) which makes the situation 'very close to the ideal model of European civil society' (*ibid* 19)

Unlike both the modern European and the Islamic case, in Indian engagement with civil society, politics was not at the core For Eisenstadt, 'The political arena, the arena of rulership, did not constitute in "historical India" – as it did in monolithic civilisations or in Confucianism – a major arena of the implementation of the transcendental visions predominant in this civilisation' (*ibid* 20) Such a conception of the political was closely related to the theory and practice of sovereignty that developed in India It emphasised 'the multiple rights – usually defined in terms of various duties – of different groups and sectors of society rather than a unitary, quasi-ontological conception-real or ideal – of 'the state' or of 'society' – giving rise to what can be defined as fractured sovereignty' (*ibid* 21) In the pregnant phase of Eisenstadt, this was a condition of 'non-ontologisation of the political arena' (*ibid* 22)

The non-ontologisation of the political and work of fractured sovereignty in Indian engagement with civil societies challenges us to rethink the primacy of the political and cult of sovereignty in our dominant conceptions of state and civil society Instead of looking at the Indian case as an aberration, this challenges us to make our conceptions of civil society a multiverse It also challenges us to rethink our bondage to a cult of sovereignty that dominates European modernity Transforming Eisenstadt's perspective of fractured sovereignty, we can say that civil society is not only a place of fractured sovereignties but also of shared sovereignties and sacred 'non-sovereignty' (see Dallmayr 2005) In order that civil society can be helpful in being a space of self-development and social transformation, the cult of absolute sovereignty at the level of state, society and self have to be transformed to a condition of shared sovereignties where all the interacting parties are interested to learn from each other in a spirit of mutual listening, co-labouring experiments, mutual interrogations and transformations In this space, the interacting parties do not want to dominate each other with a will to power and mastery, they wish to serve each other for mutual growth and transformation This second aspiration and activity makes this space a space of 'sacred non-sovereignty' (Dallmayr 2005) animated by a will to serve, nurture, share and co-create rather than a will to dominate

Towards a New Understanding of the Activities and Aspirations of Civil Society

If civil society is a multi-dimensional space of autonomy and inter-penetration what are some of its activities, works and aspirations? I

suggest that these are love, labour, language, rules/law [9] To begin with, the work of love in the sphere of civil society, Uberoi (1996) urges us to realise how loving self-sacrifice of the martyrs is crucial to the work of civil society [10] For Uberoi, it is the martyr, rather than either the heroes or the victims, who constitute the universal foundation of civil society Although Uberoi has not discussed the barbaric misuse of ideology of martyrdom for annihilating men and women in religious traditions such as Sikhism and Islam, his emphasis on 'loving self-sacrifice' is an important contribution to rethinking the modernist emasculation of civil society For instance, one cannot understand the work of martyrs like Shankar Singh Guha Niyogi of Chattisgarh Mukti Morcha (CMM)[11] without understanding the dimension of loving self-sacrifice in civil society not only as a space of association and mediation but also as a site of struggle As Neera Chandhoke writes about CMM

> 'Despite the fact that CMM used only non-violent means of protest, such as peaceful demonstrations, *dharnas*, strikes, *morchas* and petitions – all of which are permissible in civil society – their protests were savagely put down During a conversation with one of the CMM's leaders, I wondered whether it was not legitimate to use violence in a society where the regime virtually used violence against its own people His answer was an emphatic no, violence, he argued, would impoverish the movement and denude it of any spirit of commitment' (2003b 206)

Here the struggle is both a political struggle of democratisation of state and society and the spiritual struggle of realising 'power free' existence (see Dallmayr 2001), that is, not being a slave to the logic of power and using the instruments of power to oppress other people This struggle is animated by a hope that the subaltern would embody a different subjectivity and inter-subjectivity and would not try to imbibe the same logic of dominant hegemony (Chakraborty 2002) It is no wonder then that CMM strives for a new meaning of 'what it means to be a Chattisgarhi citizen According to CMM, a Chattisgarhi citizen is one who works in the region and who does not exploit either the resources or the people for his or her personal benefit' (Chandhoke 2003b 238) [12]

The relationship between the work of love and work of civil society becomes clearer in an interesting essay by Veena Das entitled, 'The Small Community of Love' For Veena Das,

> One cannot base the little community of love on an appeal to law – you cannot wait, as Cavell says, for the perfect larger community before you form the smaller communities of love Thus the constitutional promise about life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness has the public face of what it is to claim this in law and the private face of what it is to ask that human

> society contain the room for these small communities to be built (2003 57)

Elaborating this Veena Das further writes

> In a conference I attended recently, someone asked if a song like, '*Tu Hindu banega na Musalman banega – Insaan ki aulad hai insaan banega* from *Dhul ka Phul* was still possible I thought of Mr Insaniyat [humanity] and how he learnt that the claims of building small communities of love was also a way of learning to be Indian (*ibid* 59)

In his article, 'Romantic Archives Literature and the Politics of Identity in Bengal', Dipesh Chakrabarty also writes

> What politics can we reconstitute out of our romantic investment in language? The politics I have in mind, however, is not programmatic The making of a romantic literary legacy into a political archive is not something we can call into being Romantic thoughts no longer furnish our analytical frameworks, but the inheritance of romanticism is built into the Bengali language Our everyday and unavoidable transactions with the poetry of language may thus be compared to the practice of vigilant waiting This vigilant and active waiting can itself be political – listen to the romantic voice of a Bengali communist poet who captures its spirit
>
> 'When the rains depart
> We will put out in the sun
> Everything that is wet
> Woodchips and all
> Put out in the sun
> We shall
> Even our hearts' (2004 682)

Continuing our exploration of the relationship between the work of love and work of civil society, from a philosophical and theological perspective, Giani Vattimo (1999) tells us that we are all in need of forgiveness, not because we have fallen in love but because we have failed in love Such recognition of failure in love helps us to be repentant for our lack of inability to transform situations of conflicts and avert many social tragedies Given the significance of the work of reconciliation and forgiveness in many societies such as South Africa or India after the violence of apartheid or communal conflicts, the work of love is quite central in civil society organisations working on post-conflict reconciliation

From the aspiration and work of love in the sphere of civil society let us come to the work of labour Civil society is not only a sphere of public

deliberations and discursive argumentations it is also a sphere of labour where labouring bodies come together and build new spaces of habitations and hopes Gandhi's conception of 'bread labour' helps us in understanding this link between the work of labour and work of civil society, so does Swadhyaya's (a socio-spiritual movement) vision and practice of *shramabhakti* – devotional labour (Giri 2007) In Swadhyaya, participants come together and build foundations of collective well-being such as digging village wells through shared devotional labour Similar is also the work of Habitat for Humanity, a Christian socio-religious movement in the USA, which is working in many countries around the world, where volunteers of Habitat build houses together with prospective homeowners (Giri 2002a)

As civil society is also a sphere of institutions, rules and laws are quite central here though it is important to acknowledge that civil society as a space of mobilisation may challenge many of rules and laws within which civil society institutions may function

To come to theme of language in the work of civil society, in many ways it is quite central as has been attested by theorists of civil society and public sphere such as Habermas (1989) A Habermasian perspective on civil society helps us understand the key importance of communication, especially communicative action, in the work of civil society In the history of India, we find struggle for people's languages beyond the language of the elites and the pundits Movements such as the Bhakti movement as well as contemporary Dalit movement (Pandian 1998, Narayan 2001) have played an important role in creating people's languages and literatures which contributed to a new self-awareness among people as well as new themes and spaces of discursive deliberations about self, society and polity For example, in Orissa Sarala Das wrote the epic Mahabharata in Oriya, and the Panchasakshas or the five friends such as Achyutananda Das and Jagannatha Das in the 16th century not only translated epics such as Ramayana into Oriya but also created life-elevating literature They also contributed to building study centres known as *Bhagabata Ghara* for studying these works in villages (Chittaranjan Das 1997)

These reading spaces, though limited by caste and gender inequality, contributed to the generation of new spaces of conviviality and conversations But, while understanding the relationship between language and civil society in these manifold ways, it is helpful at the same time to acknowledge the limits of language in the work of civil society The language of civil society may be a heritage to a dominant language of class and culture and, here, overcoming the limits of the dominant language calls for multi-dimensional cultural, political and social

transformations [13] While civil society is a sphere of critical deliberations this very work itself calls for listening on the part of participating actors, and this in turn calls for the ability to cultivate silence in discursive argumentations

Civil Society and the Calling of Self-Development

Although modernist discourse of civil society has been imprisoned within a predominantly statist and political model, it is Hegel who urges us to understand the link between civil society and self-development when he urges us to understand the significance of inner conscience in overcoming one's egotism in civil society (Dallmayr 1993, Giri 2002b) He was aware of the crucial need for taming the civil society Hegel strives to tame civil society through 'pedagogy' or '*bildung*' as well as by designing a 'system of institutional mediations to consolidate incipient bonds between individuals in civil society' (Chandhoke 2003c 130)

Before Hegel, the proponents of Scottish Enlightenment, Adam Smith and Adam Ferguson, also urged us to understand the link between civil society and self-development In this tradition of Scottish Enlightenment, 'the idea of civil society came to rest on the notion of autonomous and moral individual as standing at the foundation of social order' (Seligman 1995 215) This individual in Smith, in the first instance, 'tempered by the instinct for approbation, sobered by the desire to be seen as praiseworthy', she is also guided by 'another consideration altogether, the workings of what Smith calls the "impartial spectator"' (Chandhoke 2003c 106) The impartial spectator needs not only to have sympathy for what s/he observes, but also 'compassion' 'The compassion of the spectator must arise altogether from the consideration of what he himself would feel if he were reduced to the same unhappy or happy situation' (*ibid* 110) Amartya Sen (2002) has argued that Adam Smith's notion of impartial spectator suggests a different pathway of justice (where the individual takes responsibility for justice) than the Rawlsian one The space of civil society also calls for development of the ability to be impartial spectators in and among the actors

This capacity to be 'impartial spectators' can be accompanied by efforts to put oneself in the shoes of the others through 'sympathy' and compassion This is also suggested in Edward Shils' plea for development of virtues of civility As Béteille interprets

> In his characterisation of civil society, Shils assigns some importance to the virtues of civility Civil society cannot prosper unless its members are able to put themselves, at least to some extent, in the position of their political opponents and their social inferiors It is in this view of the subject

> the idea of civil society comes closest to that of good society (2001 291)

Along with putting oneself into the shoes of one's opponents or inferiors, participation in the space of civil society also calls for the ability to listen rather than just talk and argue, demonstrate one's performative competence in discursive argumentation Though Habermasian approach to civil society and public sphere is open to the rise of post-conventional moral sensibility in self and society, Habermas has not paid enough attention to the need for cultivation of capacity for listening or generating appropriate social and ontological condition for listening The challenge here is a deeper one as it calls for a foundational border crossing going beyond a valorised linguistic pragmatics and acknowledges the constitutive as well as continued significance of silence in the work of discourse itself

Such a border-crossing engagement calls for going beyond the modernist conception of rational self and to realise what William Connolly (2001) calls 'plurivocity of being' Habermasian self, as that of Pierre Bourdieu, and most of us modernists, is mainly a techno-practitioner one (see Faubion 1995) and, here, we need to realise that self has also a transcendental dimension, that is, that aspect of self which establishes friendship and solidarity across boundaries, for example, between self and other This is suggested in Spinoza's conception of transindividuality (Gatens and Llyod 1999) and Roy Bhaskar's (2002) discussion of transcendentally real self as an inalienable dimension in the work of our everyday life Self-development refers to development of all the dimensions of self - sociological as well as transcendental Considered from this point of view of challenge of self-development, much work needs to be done in theory and practice as even scholars who put the challenge of self at the core seem to take it for granted Consider here the following reflections of Uberoi and Mohanty For Uberoi, 'In Gandhi's civil society the self would always look at the other in the eye as its second self, and offer dialogue and non-violent conversation without fear of the possible consequences' (2003 124) For Mohanty, 'In the conception of creative self every entity grants other entities status for seeking creative fulfilment In other words, *it is not placed as Self vs Other It is in a framework of Self and Self* (2003 17, italics original) But how does one treat other as self and oneself as another? Does it call for ontological as well as social processes of self-development? Uberoi and Mohanty do not discuss the process of self-development and inclusion of the other Put briefly, in tune with the multi-valued perspective of civil society presented earlier, such a mode of relationship

on the part of self calls for ongoing practices of self-development on the part of actors and institutions facilitated by participation in love, labour, language, and rules/laws

Civil Society and Self-Development: Some Further Issues of Theory and Practice

Civil society as a space of creativity, public deliberation, self-cultivation, socio-political and socio-spiritual struggles calls for continued self-development on the part of actors and institutions As has already been suggested, some of the challenges of self-development in the sphere of civil society are development of the capacity of listening, overcoming the logic of power and domination, creating a condition for critical reflection, and establishing relations of non-duality, non-domination and non-violence not only between self and other but also as a foundation of social order It should be clear that these are as much challenges for individuals as for institutions Béteille looks at civil society as mainly consisting of mediating institutions but does not explore the challenge of self-development and transformations such as realisation of a reflective space of mutual learning and listening and dialogical democracy that institutions of civil society face so that these institutions contribute to multi-dimensional self-realisation of actors rather than repress or suppress them

Voluntary organisations and social movements are an important part of civil society Often these organisations suffer from the problem of entrenched authoritarianism and here self-development calls for realisation of dialogical democracy on the part of leaders and institutions Those who work with them many a time are treated as bonded labourers and their need for self-development are not given sufficient attention (Giri 2004) In my study of one such NGO, I found that the funds allocated for staff development in this remained unutilised for years This organisation at the same time continues to provide support to tribal people in their struggle against multinational mining companies at great risk to itself and its workers According to one of the leaders of this organisation, voluntary action has both a constructive and confrontational side and, when it confronts state and market, its decision of confrontation cannot be solely an organisational decision If there is not enough preparation in courage, self-sacrifice and integral moral responsibility towards suffering humanity, it is difficult to be on the side of the people when actors are confronted with dire consequences (*ibid*)

Such a challenge of self-development confronts not only voluntary organisations but also social movements Many a time social movements

work as hegemonic entities suppressing creative unfoldment of its participants In this context what Mohanty writes deserves our careful consideration

> Self here is perceived as a creative self and not an obsessive self or exclusivist assertion of an identity [ ] We have also seen people's movements functioning as monolithic movements not allowing democratic dissent within or not allowing freedom to the sub-groups within the movement (2003 17)

In the era of globalisation, the challenge of self-development has more facets than just doing yoga It requires personal knowledge of the shifting trajectories of state, market and the global system [14] First of all, voluntary organisations, movements and institutions in civil society can learn from each other Voluntary organisations in countries such as India are not condemned only to receive funds from such donor agencies as HIVOS from The Netherlands and ACTIONAID from the UK and execute programmes among the poor in their localities, they should study poverty in the UK and the Netherlands, thus creating a condition for reciprocal learning There has to be more people-to-people contact and learning and, when it happens, as in the global village programme of Habitat for Humanity (see Giri 2002b) or in the mutual visit of each other's group in the slum dwellers' association of South Asia, it creates condition for critical and reflective learning As Arjun Appadurai (2002) tells us, when leaders from slum improvement associations of Karachi visit their counterparts in Mumbai, they ask questions about funding and transparency which one does not ask so innocently in one's home locations Such questions create opportunity for critical self-reflection on the part of the host organisation

By Way of Conclusion

Self-development has been a neglected theme in the discourse of civil society The present essay has explored links between civil society and self-development, that is, how civil society has to contribute to self-development of individuals and institutions and how self-development is crucial to a revitalisation of civil society But understanding this link challenges us for a multi-dimensional and multi-valued understanding of civil society, going beyond many modernistic dualisms – such as private and public, tradition and modernity, civil society and good society, and religion and secularism Such a multi-valued understanding not only helps in a new understanding of civil society, but also the paths of Indian modernities in particular and global modernities in general in societies

and histories It also provides a new aspiration, namely, of self-development and social transformation for self and civil society to live and strive towards

Notes

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1 For Giddens (1994), sociology is part of the post-traditional telos of modernity and, for Beteille (2002), sociology is a modern, neither a postmodern nor a traditional discipline
2 For example, following Max Weber, Eisenstadt, a key proponent of the multiple modernities approach, defines the core of modernity as the deconstruction of a God-ordained worldview held by all axial civilisations 'Since modern societies are no longer embedded in meaningful transcendental orders, they are in principle open to continuous transformation and adaptation' (2005 10)
3 For Uberoi,

> The struggle to define and establish civil society in India during the modern period runs parallel to the rise, development and recognition of the vernaculars and vernacularism everywhere in language, labour and culture, and it is the story of religion and politics proceeding from Kabir (1440-1518) to the martyrdom of Mahatma Gandhi (2003 123)

Uberoi himself says that civil society is not only a modernistic category and we can explore struggles for Indian modernities and civil societies from the strivings of Buddha and his social struggles to build new critical spaces
4 For Chandhoke, 'Civil society is not an institution, it is, rather, a process whereby the inhabitants of the sphere [that is, civil society] constantly monitor both the state and monopoly of power within itself' (2003a 57) Chandhoke approaches civil society from the vantage point of continued mobilisation though she seems to be stressing more political mobilisation and less on reflective mobilisation of self Similarly, Oommen (2001a) has a mobilisational approach to civil society, while Beteille (2001), a predominantly institutional approach This dualism between mobilisation and institutionalisation needs to be overcome for a fuller understanding of civil society
5 Beteille asks 'How far do religious movements and assemblies for moral, ethical and spiritual discourses contribute to the formation of civil society?' and answers

> They may contribute a very great deal to the formation of the good society, depending, of course, on what one means by that phrase [ ] I remain sceptical about what religious assemblies and movements can contribute directly to the formation of civil society, although there indirect contribution may be extremely valuable (2001 307)

But, for Oommen, 'religious organisations were very much part of civil society in pre-independent India' (2001a 229) It is interesting to note here that both Uberoi and Oommen are not following any universalising conception of modernity Oommen (2001b) follows a 'multiple modernities' perspective in his work, while Uberoi (2002) is one of the few proponents of Indian modernity

6 This is similar to Uberoi's argument about Sikhism being a product of dialogue between Hinduism and Islam (1996)

7 As Hawley writes, 'These [Bhakti] poets' intimate involvement with their audiences – in their own life times, doubtless, but certainly down the generation as subsequent performers and their audiences – have taken up these roles – is the real democracy of *bhakti*' (2005 332)

8 In this context what Eisenstadt writes about Bhakti movement is insightful 'Many of the visions promulgated by those movements emphasised equality, but it was above all equality in the cultural or religious arena, with respect to access to worship, and only to some extent in the definition of membership in the political community' (2005 23)

9 This four-dimensional conceptualisation can be compared with four dimensions of civil society articulated by Cohen and Arato (1992) publicity, plurality, legality, and privacy There are no references to love and labour in this framework, though the theme of privacy may touch upon the theme of love to some extent But the theme of love in the present model also refers to socially transforming love

10 In his reflections on civil society, Uberoi (1996) is not within the modernist trap He neither considers civil society as a product of modernist transition in history (though he would not discount its significance in understanding the contour that civil society has taken in modern past and present) nor does he look at it through the dominant logic of power

11 Chattisgarh Mukti Morcha is a multi-dimensional social movement of tribal people and workers in the Chattisgarh region fighting for dignity and rights, and its leader Shankar Singh Guha Niyogi was gunned down at the behest of the contractors and industrialists of the region

12 The anonymous reader of this paper for *Sociological Bulletin* has raised the question of how appropriate it is to use the phrase 'Chattisgarhi citizen' Chandhoke uses it, but the way I understand its significance is that it challenges us to realise a multi-layered conception of citizenship We are not only citizens of our nation-states, we are also citizens of our significant communities of belonging including citizens of the world Today, the rise of transnational civic movements and emergent discourse and practice of cosmopolitanism challenges us to realise the limits of nation-state centred discourse and practice of citizenship This also challenges us to go beyond a purely *etic* use and understanding of categories such as citizenship and have an *emic* perspective which emerges from dialogues with people in conversations

13 In her essay, 'Language, Translation and Domination, Chandhoke (2003c) speaks about the condition of tribal people and their languages in the discourse of civil society in modern India For a tribal, a particular piece of land belongs to him because the bones of his ancestors are buried there But this language is not easily comprehensible in the dominant language of property rights that dominate state and civil society in modern India The agents of state and civil society may negotiate with these subaltern languages but they do so from the perspective of the dominant language For Chandhoke,

> the more powerful language in civil society does not even have to practice savageness to bludgeon, club or hammer the less powerful language into

> insensibility, which is something that Habermas fears, and that he attempts to ward off through discourse ethics The deliberative space of civil society has already been colonized, already saturated with power that privileges certain ideas of land proprietorship (*ibid* 195)

14 Mohanty writes

> The current historical situation is characterized by an ever-intensifying contradiction between hegemony and self-realisation It manifests at every level, global, national and local in spatial terms and class, caste, race, ethnic, gender and such other terms of social relations The former reflects struggles over political power vertically and the latter involves contests horizontally while all of them intersect at numerous levels Global capitalism is the principal force whose influence decisively permeates all the contradictions at present (2003 15)

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DISCUSSION

On Indigenising and Universalising Social Knowledge

Universalising Social Science: Generalising beyond the Context*

Partha Nath Mukherji

In a recent issue of *Sociological Bulletin* (56/1), Namrata Gupta (2007) has initiated a discussion on universalisation and indigenisation of social science knowledge Apart from her, four scholars have participated in this discussion This is very welcome as it ties up with the discourse themes of the first and the second South Asian Workshop of Sociologists, held in February 2005 and December 2005, in Surajkund There we concentrated on issues of relevance and rigour in our discipline, so vitally important for knowledge generation, particularly for our region (see Jayaram, Kaur and Mukherji 2005) [1]

The contribution of the West to the social sciences is undeniable, so is its hegemonic influence over the disciplines Given the historicity of their evolution, it would indeed be surprising if it was otherwise I am far from suggesting that all social science generated by the western scholars, or scholars trained in the West, by definition, is parochial Parallel paradigms and theories have emanated from the West They coexist and compete with each other, advancing claims of their universality However, not always do these claims prove to be true for the countries of the non-western world I have posed this problematic elsewhere can 'the universal always explain the particular unless the universals in the particulars contribute to the construction of the universal? Is such universality possible in the social sciences?' (Mukherji and Sengupta

2004 16) I have argued that *indigenisation* is one of the necessary conditions for universalising sociology and the social sciences I have cautioned that it should not be confused with *parochialisation* (2005, see also Mukherji 2004 15-35) [2]

Perhaps it is not easy to comprehend precisely what 'exactly' is meant by 'indigenisation' or 'universalisation', as Rajesh Gill (2007) would like to know, nor do I think it is absolutely necessary I am with her on the danger of indigenisation sliding into 'ghettoisation', much the same as I have distanced it from 'parochialisation' in the social sciences (see Mukherji 2005 318-19) Precisely because of the need for a better comprehension of this problematic, I propose to illustrate my position very briefly with

(i) the four areas of contestation with western social sciences that I posed before an international audience of sociologists in Miami in 2005,
(ii) western modernity,
(iii) western multiculturalism, and
(iv) conceptualising social movements

I shall then conclude with the pervasive power of theorisation and the need for a South Asian academic community that would learn about the others and about themselves more from direct interactions through collaborative and comparative efforts than from handed down knowledge from elsewhere In so doing, we will enrich sociology and the social sciences

Four Areas of Contestation

Presenting a paper to an audience of presidents of national associations of sociology from more than forty countries spanning all the continents, in Miami in 2005, I mentioned at least four areas of contestation that some of us face with the dominant western paradigms The first related to the assumed superiority of the *universality of 'rights'*, centred in the *individual*, over the *universality of 'obligations'*, centred in the *normative community* and the group This is one principal reason, I argued, why the concept of human rights is fuzzy and prone to conflicting and suspect interpretations, sometimes with disastrous consequences The rich heritage of sociology is premised on the classical antinomies of the superiority of the rational-legal over the traditional, contract over status, urban over rural (folk), 'organic' over 'mechanical', *Gesellschaft* over *Gemeinschaft*, and so on that follow from western experience We are familiar with this critique since 1955 when D P Mukerji questioned the universality of this

unilinear western modernity paradigm (see Mukherji 1986 5-15) Tradition was not invariably opposed to modernity in the dynamic of social and economic development Nor was there a singular invariant linear process of modernity premised on western modernity There were multiple modernities at work Even this context has changed with the advent of the 'global age' (Giddens 2007)

My second point of contestation was the blind adherence to the position that the *western-style representative forms of democracy* are universal The presumed universality of this western-type institution, and its imposition on cultures and societies alien to it, is fraught with dangerous consequences Witness the mess that has been created in Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine and other countries where democracy is sought to be constructed on the western model of representative democracy through firepower It is time we realised that democracy can take off from indigenous institutional forms The traditional Indian democratic ethos lay in a 'participatory' form of democracy anchored in the indigenous concept of the *panchayat* ardently propagated by Mahatma Gandhi Colonialism imposed on us institutions modelled on the Westminster form, transplanted during authoritarian colonial rule to serve imperial ends On gaining independence, overnight, these institutions were expected to play the role of democratic governance as in the West It should be of interest to the world that after four decades, the Indian Constitution was radically amended to make space for the third tier of autonomous governance (*Panchayati Raj*) at the grassroots level [3] This is a rare, if not unique, example of a third tier of government in a democratic federal polity

The third area of contestation is related to the parochialism of western paradigm in respect to the *concept and theory of the nation-state* The archetype of the western nation-state symbolised in the post-Revolution France, and other European and North American states, no longer held true for most postcolonial states, nor even for the western nation-states The Eurocentric conceptualisation of a mono-cultural nation-state is no longer universal We cannot accept the argument that if a country does not conform to the classical western attributes of the nation-state, it is not one Concepts need not be frozen for all time if they have outlived their utility Concepts can be in motion The reconceptualisation of a more universally acceptable nation-state rests with countries that have been able to sustain immensely culturally plural states by public preference [4] In this instance, the West could gain from the South Asian realities, particularly from India

Finally, we need to question seriously whether and to what extent the unmitigated pursuit of material wants, that is, unharnessed consumerism

and wasteful lifestyles, initiated by the globalising process in the West, is compatible with ecological balance, environmental health and social peace This is one area in which the developing world is practising one-upmanship competition with the West and with each other [5]

Western Modernity

The western hegemonic stance is so deeply internalised that some of the most outstanding western scholars sometimes reflect this as ethno-centrism, perhaps unintended Take, for instance, Anthony Giddens Sociology is all about '*institutions and modes of life brought into being*, by the massive set of social changes *emanating first of all from Europe* (and which today have become global in scope) creating modern social institutions' (1987 25, italics added) So, modernity is all about 'institutions and modes of life' that have originated in the European West The opposition between traditional and modern institutions is implicit in this argument In a more recent lecture, he makes a similar claim for the European Union He is convinced that 'with all its current difficulties', the European Union is a western model for the world for sustaining 'real sovereignty through the common pooling of resources' (2007 21)

Western Multiculturalism

My next illustration draws from the most recent western phenomenon, namely, multiculturalism, that is sought to be universalised for the rest of the world *Multiculturalism*, understood as ideology, theory and public policy, has been conceptualised and practiced in the West [6] Once again, Giddens believes 'very strongly' that 'the future lies with multi-culturalism' He then certifies Canada as 'probably the most successful multicultural country' (*ibid* 18) Scarcely does he show any under-standing that the world of multiculturalism is fundamentally different from the contextual realities of the plural countries of South Asia and elsewhere in the developing world South Asian societies have had co-existent multiple cultures for millennia as one of the oldest civilisations of the world The challenges confronted by the multicultural West to their mono-cultural 'nationhood' arises from the recent history of waves of post-War immigration in response to labour shortages that took place on account, first, of the massive loss of European lives during the World Wars, then, due to the liberal policies designed to attract a work force through political asylums and, in the last instance, due to economic globalisation and the worldwide labour mobility that it has triggered No such problem of immigrants creating a cultural imbalance exists to the

already culturally heterogeneous South Asia Yet it is commonplace to hear that 'multicultural' countries (in the sense of culturally plural societies) must follow 'multiculturalism' If for no other reason but to distinguish the western from the South Asian historical experience, it is necessary to distinguish between western multi-culturalism[7] and South Asian pluralism (that is, pluri-cultural, multi-ethnic countries) In comparison to *multiculturalism,* which is specific to western experience, *pluralism* is a more pervasive phenomenon This is not to suggest that in the real western and non-western worlds, attributes of multiculturalism and pluralism do not overlap The argument is that they constitute different ensembles or configurations

Conceptualising Social Movements

The sociological literature on social movements testifies to a similar western propensity to claim their origin in the West How social movement should be defined also figures as a western prerogative 'As they evolved in the West', contends Charles Tilly, an outstanding American sociologist,

> social movements combined three major elements (i) sustained *claims-making,* (ii) array of *public performances* including marches, rallies, processions, demonstrations, occupations, picket lines, blockades, public meetings, delegations, statements to and in public media, petition drives, letter-writing, pamphleteering, lobbying, and creation of specialized associations, coalitions, or fronts – in short, the *social movement repertoire,* and (iii) repeated *public displays* of worthiness, unity, numbers and commitment (WUNC) by such means as wearing colours, marching in disciplined ranks, sporting badges that advertise the cause, displaying signs, chanting slogans, singing militant songs, and picketing public buildings (2006 183-84, italics added)

Tilly goes on to argue that 'Western Europeans and North Americans' were the ones to have put 'the elements of a new political form' in the late 18th century, which became available to the 'ordinary people' in these countries in the first half of the 19th century even 'as it began spreading to the other parts of the world' Social movements, he contends, 'had never existed anywhere in the world three centuries ago' (*ibid* 182-82) Social mobilisations involving collective violence, such as civil war and terrorism, revolts, rebellions, revolutions, and state-sponsored terrorism,[8] by definition, have been excluded from the purview of social movements (*ibid* 118-50)

Social movements, in such a formulation, perform a limited functional role within a largely democratic framework The means and modes of protest lie within the permissible limits of regulation of social order Implicitly, there existed a pre-social movement era, much the same as the pre-modern era Indigenous to the West, they are now becoming ubiquitous or universalised

Immanuel Wallerstein (2002 29) distinguishes between 'social' and 'national' movements, beginning mid-19th century The former referring to the class struggles primarily conceived by the socialist parties and trade unions, and the latter to national liberation struggles for the creation of new states Currently, the more familiar distinction made, first in Europe, is between the 'old' and the 'new' social movements, the former corresponding to class movements, and the latter to the emergence of identitarian movements based on ethnicity and gender, as also, mobilisations against environmental degradation The North American emphasis, in contrast, is on the *rational actor* and the resource-mobilisation postulates, an extension of the pressure-/interest-group mobilisations (Edelman 2001 288-89)

The discourse on social movements gets circumscribed by western historicity The South Asian experience in general, and the Indian, in particular, provide extraordinarily rich experience of numerous varieties of social mobilisations over time, pre-dating the western era of the so-called 'old' social movements It is possible to attempt a theoretical orientation/framework that is not constrained by any historicity, at the same time one that permits analysis of the historical evolution of social movements in their social and cultural specificity This is possible if we regard social movement as the *generic*, and the other forms of socially mobilised social conflicts as the *species* type

In this framework, social movement takes place in the context of some social conflict and must have to do with social change (that is, either promoting or resisting change) Not all social movements are of the same intensity, nor are they directed towards similar kinds of changes It follows that social movement, conflict and change have to be studied in their interrelation within a single framework The question that has to be addressed is what kind of social change does the social movement intend to bring about? This necessarily involves classifying social change Does the social movement intend to bring about a change *in* the social system under reference (quasi-structural, intra-systemic, accumulative, incremental, evolutionary), or change *of* the system (structural, systemic, alterative, transformative, revolutionary)? In this manner we can distinguish between quasi-structural social movements (Tilly's sole province of social movements) and structural social movements that

would include transformatory and revolutionary social movements (Mukherji 2008)

A dynamic element can be introduced in the framework by addressing yet another question how and by what means does the social movement intend to bring about the quasi-structural or structural changes? The framework then can take the form of a dynamic model by injecting (a) institutional means (legitimated by the laws of the land), (b) non-institutionalised means – violent or non-violent – that are not legitimated by the laws of the land, hence attracting state suppression, or (c) a combination of both

Social movements in this dynamic model are not bound by any historicity – western or non-western Yet it is possible to trace the historical progression, retrogression or routinisation of specific social movements over time

A social movement is a social mobilisation by an organisation that has a leadership and membership and an amorphous fluctuating following, upholding an ideology or cause/s, seeking to bring about intended change/s, within a given social system or of the system, through legitimate institutional, or non-institutional means or a combination of both, violent or non-violent, in the face of opposition by those who feel they are likely to be affected adversely by the changes intended The whole range of social mobilisations seeking grievance redressal, reformist, transformatory and revolutionary changes, sought to be brought about through protest, revolt, rebellion, civil strife, will qualify as social movements [9]

Pervasive Power of Theorising

There is a popular but mistaken notion, particularly among social scientists in our part of the world and upcoming civil society actors, that theorising in the social sciences is idle waste of time, that it is remote from the ground realities Facts, supposedly, speak for themselves This is a dangerous fallacy in need of correction Theoretical knowledge based on rigorous empirical research constitutes power that pervades Modernity, nation-state, multiculturalism, pluralism, globalisation are sterling examples of conceptual-theoretical constructions by which the world is perceived, and these are contributions from western institutions Whole countries and their peoples bear the consequences of this power of knowledge for better and/or for worse Methodology is the *raison d'être* of legitimising research that leads to powerful theorisation Unfortunately, in our part of the world, often, lip-service is given to methodological rigour in research The so-called fact-finding research,

which is inevitable and invaluable for taking administrative and policy decisions, tends to replace basic and fundamental research, which examines the very premises that underlie action or policy orientation We are caught up in the whirlpool of recurrent buzz words of development like – sustainable development, empowerment, human rights, gender and social discriminations, and the like Coming mostly as received wisdom, they are evocative of genuine concerns for democracy, development and emancipation for any society The dynamic of social changes and development, that generate contradictions and conflicts, is infinitely more complex, hence incomparably more difficult to research

South Asian Academic Community

It is high time, as we enter the global age in a fiercely competitive liberalised world, that South Asian sociologists/social scientists mobilised themselves into an academic community that would address substantive issues that vitally affect their societies, economies, cultures and polities The formalisation of the South Asian Sociological Society (SASS) has to move forward

While the accumulated social science knowledge is indispensable to any research in the social sciences, it is no less important to avoid the pitfalls of a 'captive mind'[10] that uncritically accepts received wisdom as universal knowledge We should be in a position to discern the lack-of-fit (or the goodness-of-fit) between the explanatory power (or the power of comprehension) of extant theories and paradigms, and the empirical ground realities Even more important is to remain steadfast in our efforts to comprehend and explain reality through ever-more efficient theoretical abstractions and methodologically rigorous empirical research that help us to conceptualise and generalise beyond the context Then and only then shall we serve our people with knowledge that is relevant and contribute to the enrichment of the social sciences

Notes

* Abstracted from the keynote address presented at South Asian Sociology Conference, organised by the South Asian Sociological Society and hosted by Independent University, Bangladesh, on the theme 'Sociology in South Asia Recent Trends and Future Prospects', 10-11 March 2008 I am thankful to Vasudha Dhingra for her perceptive feedbacks and editorial help, and to Meenakshi for her never-failing co-operation from the library Both Nandkumar and Joshy provided efficient support in the production of the text

1 In all, there were 38 participants in the Workshop They came from different countries Bangladesh (5), Bhutan (1), Pakistan (2), South Africa (1), Sri Lanka (6), and Sweden (1) India, as the host country, had a larger contingent (22)

2 Wallerstein (1996 53) points out that the claim of western social sciences to be universal remained, by and large, established during the post-War period (1945-1970), until the rise of East Asian power The social sciences, right from their inception, were primarily concerned with the empirical realities in the West The 'presumed problematic of "modernity" that was the underlying objective of intellectual inquiry in the social sciences what it was, what social "problem" it caused, how we might better understand its evolution', emerged during this period (1997a) Subsequently, Wallerstein warned that 'if social science is to make any progress in the 21st century, it must overcome the Eurocentric heritage which has distorted its analyses and its capacity to deal with problems of the contemporary world' (1997b 22)

3 More recently, Amartya Sen has questioned the 'frequently reiterated view that democracy is just a western idea, and that democracy is therefore just a form of westernization' He argues that the essence of democracy lies in the ideal of 'public reasoning', which is closely linked with (a) 'the tolerance of different points of views', and (b) 'the encouragement of public discussion' The idea of democracy, therefore, has global roots that can be found in many civilisations and cultures He asserts, '[t]o ignore the centrality of public reasoning in the idea of democracy not only distorts and diminishes the history of democratic ideas, it also detracts attention from the interactive processes through which a democracy functions and on which its success depends' (Sen 2003)

4 I have consistently argued against the dominant western model of the nation that can be conceptualised independent of the state (see Mukherji, 1992, 1994, 1998, 1999,2007)

5 My two venerable commentators were both professors at Miami University, and one of them went to the extent of acknowledging that these contestations could as well be a western critique of the West!

6 In my keynote address entitled 'Western Construction of Multiculturalism and Challenges to Nation-State Building in Nepal and India', delivered at the International Conference on 'Social Sciences in a Multicultural World Addressing the Persistence of Deprivation, Conflict and Violence', organised by the Sociological/Anthropological Society of Nepal (SASON) in Kathmandu, Nepal, 11-13 December 2006, I have extensively dealt with this problematic

7 Paul Kelly describes the 'circumstances of multiculturalism' as referring to the existence of 'more than one culture in the public realm', even if 'one may find themselves subordinated to another culture' This is incontrovertible The problematic is how to go about this fact of 'circumstance of multiculturalism' The ideological positions range from (a) the enforcement of 'coerced uniformity' of the mono-cultural nation-state, to (b) 'a robust application of egalitarian or libertarian principles of justice and rights such that the consequences of group differences and conflict can be dealt with', to (c) 'rethink our categories and values and offer a new form of theoretical language or ideology' (2002 4)

8 Rajendra Singh is in close agreement with Tilly on this point Singh observes, 'unlike movements, however, riot and rebellion necessarily involve violence Revolution is necessarily violent and unlike movement, riot and rebellion, it involves all sections of society living in its territory' (2001 36) Non-violent revolution, in his scheme, is axiomatically out, and so is it from Tilly's framework Besides, while revolution involves mobilisation of all sections of population, social movements involve only a

section The scope of social movements, therefore, is limited to seeking 'redressal of a grievance or to struggle for specific goals and objectives' (*ibid*)

9 This is the first time I have attempted a definition of social movement I am indebted to Vasudha Dhingra for compelling me to do so

10 Syed Hussain Alatas, the distinguished Malaysian sociologist, introduced the concept of the 'captive mind', which according to him 'is the product of higher institutions of learning, either at home or abroad, whose way of thinking is dominated by western thought in an imitative uncritical manner' It is 'uncreative and incapable of raising original problems', 'incapable of devising analytical method independent of current stereotypes', incapable of separating the particular from the universal in science and thereby properly adapting the universally valid corpus of scientific knowledge to the particular local situation', 'fragmented in outlook', alienated from the major issues of society', 'alienated from its own national tradition, if it exists, in the field of intellectual pursuit', 'is unconscious of its own captivity and the conditioning factors making it what it is', 'is not amenable to an adequate quantitative analysis but it can be studied by empirical observation', 'is a result of the western dominance over the rest of the world' (2004 83)

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Indirect Rule: Western Paradigms in South African Academia

Raymond Suttner

The 'universalisation and indigenisation' issue, as it arises in South Africa, converges in some respects and diverges in others from problems raised in the first part of the discussion initiated by Namrata Gupta (2007), which engaged primarily with western/northern scholarship In South Africa, that is a factor, but it is also replicated internally through specific legacies The key problem is perpetuation of the colonial/ apartheid knowledge projects through untransformed knowledge

structures Apartheid education does not persist through direct racism, but through the worship of the West, characteristic of pre-democracy scholarship and inadequate empowerment of black scholars (not dealt with here), continuing after 1994 Educational institutions of various types or dominant sectors are unsympathetic to non-western paradigms and unable to incorporate the lived realities of most black South Africans

The problem is compounded by black South African scholars, including those previously involved in the liberation struggle, who are reluctant to remain in academia, attracted by employment in government or better remuneration in business The result is that staff composition in higher education institutions after 1994 has not altered very much Many white academics had previously contributed towards progressive re-writing of South African history or questioning of apartheid and liberal approaches to economic and social questions The African National Congress, on attaining dominance in government, has unfortunately not always encouraged debate, where the outcome may be unfavourable to itself Its tendency to be hostile to pluralism has led many scholars to retreat into narrower research and lament every error of the 'new South Africa'

At the level of scholarship, the social sciences are dominated by western paradigms, and certain South African or western scholars have canonical status within the universities The inapplicability of many concepts to South African society leads to a substantial disjuncture between the reality experienced by South Africans and what is written about it

Almost all social science journals are controlled by a small group of people, who tend to have links with one another and sister journals in the United Kingdom and the United States of America Thus, where an established scholar submits an article which conforms to the dominant paradigms, they tend to have an easy passage with referees On the other hand, those (especially, the less established) challenging the dominant positions are accused of inadequate consultation of certain authors (whose relevance may not be demonstrated) or simply receive unsubstantiated negative reports from the referees

The paradigmatic dominance is illustrated by the application of the 'dominant party' approach in South Africa It is argued by most of the political science and sociological community that, because the African National Congress is unlikely to be defeated in the foreseeable future, opposing the dominant paradigms is detrimental to democracy To flourish, democratisation must include a 'circulation of elites' on a reasonably regular basis The problem with this approach is that it is based on a narrow, electoralist and anti-popular notion of democracy,

ignoring sites of power other than parliament At the level of knowledge production, the lineage of this alleged theory, which has little in the way of explanatory power, can be traced to western political science's dogmatic prescriptions about the meaning of democracy – a concept used in the singular, equated with representative democracy (see Southall 2005, Suttner 2006)

Similarly, in gender studies, journal references are cluttered with the works of western scholars, whose model of feminism, gender and allied questions derives from their societies These notions are not treated as open for contestation, in the light of the mode of articulating them in the West not fitting all of South African reality For example, the rhetoric of manhood used in liberation struggles, restoring virility, ending emasculation and so on, is treated as opposition to gender equality In reality, Africans were infantilised and men were referred to as 'boys' The call for restoration of manhood is usually closely tied in the thinking of liberation movements and colonial/apartheid governments with Africans being a 'child race' [1]

There are clusters of friends who control journals, who are also professors who determine who will be external examiners of theses, who decide what books will be introduced to undergraduates and the lines of enquiry postgraduate researchers will be encouraged to pursue The tendency is to look to the West and use what is written there, whether or not it is applicable to South Africa In that respect, there is convergence between African and Indian academia (Gupta 2007)

In South Africa, both indigeneity and universality require elaboration and scrutiny One of the problems of the concepts we confront is that universality is attributed to one potential of many in operation What is needed is recognition of plurality of meanings Here, I think of concepts like democracy, culture, patriarchy and feminism, amongst others

The word indigeneity is also sometimes problematic, becoming a pristine and defensive refuge of those advancing a timeless, essentialist, unchanging African culture It has gender implications in that it becomes a basis for denying women rights to participate fully in democratic activity and can also be the rationale for gender violence where certain forms of dress are described as 'unAfrican'

This is not to say the concept of indigeneity is not useful if it is taken to mean research that draws on local understandings supplemented by western concepts, where valuable, and discards the western element, if inapplicable Personally, I would hesitate to suggest that these local insights are universally applicable, since they, like the concepts and paradigms of the West, are derived from specific social conditions

Note

1 I am aware of the construction of Indians, especially Bengalis, as being effeminate

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Review Article

Bourdieu in a Dual Context: India and France

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The contributions of Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002), a dominant figure in French Sociology during the last quarter of the 20th century, has been sparsely documented and little understood in India To reflect on his contributions, as understood by Indian and French scholars, the Department of Sociology at the Delhi School of Economics organised a workshop *Reading Pierre Bourdieu in a Dual Context** is a collection of nine articles presented by Indian and French scholars at that workshop Along with a lucid and informative introduction by editors Roland Lardinois and Meenakshi Thapan, these nine articles fill a huge void in the sociology literature in India

Thapan and Lardinois, in their introductory chapter, accomplish a twofold task Apart from introducing the reader to Bourdieu's work, they bring out the attempts by Indian scholars to apply Bourdieu's concepts, particularly 'intellectual field', 'habitus', 'symbolic cultural capital', 'symbolic violence', and so on Bourdieu's most striking achievement, according to Thapan and Lardinois, was his 'breaking with institutional divisions' as well as with hierarchies They note

> Bourdieu could reconcile the sociological legacy of Marx, Durkheim and Weber, mobilise the most sophisticated statistical tools of the French school of Correspondence Analysis, and deal with the colonial situation in Algeria, the aftermath of the events of 1968, or the matrimonial strategies of peasant families in south-western France at one and the same time (p 7)

Thapan and Lardinois bring out the significant contribution of Bourdieu, so far relatively unknown, towards methodological enrichment of sociology His concern with problems of method becomes evident in his discussion of the limits of objectivism, a major paradigm of positivistic scientism, and his endeavour to provide an alternative to objectivism and phenomenological and ethnomethodological modes of theoretical knowledge Using the concept of 'praxeological knowledge' as knowledge between individual actors and objective structures for understanding social reality, Bourdieu suggested a dialectical relationship between subject and object He, thus, tried to resolve the eternal problem of the opposition between essentialism and determinism through his concept of 'habitus' which mediates between the subject and the object – the concept that has earned for him the status of the most innovative and non-conventional sociologist

André Béteille (2002 136-63) applied Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and capital in his study of the role and influence of the Indian family in the reproduction of inequality Every family with its own 'stock of cultural capital' (knowledge, skills, and tastes), also possesses its own 'network of social relationships', that is, social capital, culminating in inequality among individuals inheriting these The need to supplement 'economic capital' with 'symbolic/cultural capital' in understanding economic structures and systems of domination are further emphasised by Bikram Narayan Nanda (1992) and Carol Upadhya (1997) Satish Deshpande (2003) argues that the rise and significance of middle class in independent India demonstrates the link between cultural capital and power Applying Bourdieu's 'habitus', Deepak Mehta (1997) confirms the convergence between subjectivism and objectivism in his study of the Ansaris (the weaver community) of Barabanki in northern Uttar Pradesh In several studies by feminist sociologists in India, the concept of habitus has been used to demonstrate how both compliance and resistance work together in women's struggle for existence (Palriwala 1990, Kalpagam 2000, Thapan 2004)

Christophe Charle brings out the twin domination, territorial and cultural, exercised by the three 'imperial societies', that is, the United Kingdom, Germany, and France, taking upon them the self-imposed task of civilising primitive societies Rejecting the usual attempt of homogenising the imperial societies, Charle focuses upon the 'deep differences' between the types of societies and types of imperialisms involved in the struggle in 1914 He finds Bourdieu's 'field' an extremely handy concept to theorise the variable and contextual notion of 'imperial societies', combining both the internal and external, the material and cultural Charle further introduces the notion of 'national

habitus' as against the simplistic notion of 'nationalism', the former implying not only patriotic defence but a specific social ideal that is superior to that of its enemy, too Charle insists that this phenomenon/ crisis cannot be defined simply in terms of 'spread of nationalism' (which is too simplistic), 'social Darwinism', 'militarism' or 'war culture' Thus, 'national habitus', according to him, is more useful as a concept to handle the phenomenon

Usha Kalpagam makes a comparison between Bourdieu and Michel Foucault in terms of their notion of 'State' She concludes that, while Foucault decentres the State in his notion of 'governmentality', shifting focus from a centralised power centre to the capillaries that distribute power and to the points at which power is applied, in its subjectifying effects, Bourdieu fails to explain the rise of individualisation as a new 'social' field Bourdieu, Kalpagam feels, renders opaque the nature of modern governmental power and its underlying political rationalities While noting that the State takes on the role of totalisation and objectivisation, he does not show how it simultaneously leads to individualisation and creates both a new field of the social and new spheres of governmental power in which population, both individual and mass, becomes an object of governmental interventions According to Kalpagam, 'it is these Foucauldian insights which Bourdieu lacks, that provides a justification for enumeration, codification and classification as a way of enabling abstraction that is integral to modern state power' (p 82) Through the structuring it imposes on practices, the State institutes and inculcates common symbolic forms of thought, social frames of perception, understanding or memory, state forms of classification or practical schemes of perception, appreciation and action The State, thus, effects a theoretical unification leading to 'Statist Capital ' Bourdieu further argues that through the structuring it imposes on practices, the State institutes and inculcates common symbolic forms of thought, social frames of perception, understanding or memory, State forms of classification, or practical schemes of perception, appreciation and action For Bourdieu, it is the school system through which the state produces and imposes categories of thought that we spontaneously apply to all things of the social world, including the State itself Bourdieu makes a significant contribution, however, by explaining State as a culmination of a process of concentration of different species of capital the capital of physical force (army/police), economic capital, information capital and symbolic capital The State, thus, constitutes a 'field of power' within which the holders of different capitals struggle for power

Sheena Jain examines Bourdieu's theory of 'symbolic' which underlines the fact that symbolism is intrinsic to human practice, and symbolic

phenomena are products of material and social environment in which human practice takes place as well as contributes to the creation of this environment Through 'world making', Bourdieu argues, disagreeing with Durkheim, cognitive dispositions vary towards the world according to social positions and historical situations By deconstructing the Durkheimian ideas of social consensus and collective conscience, Bourdieu brings out the political role played by symbolic systems in relation to systems of social domination and subordination According to Bourdieu, individual and society merge together, since the mental structures are nothing but an embodiment of social divisions Symbolic systems too are structured just like the social structures, contributing to the maintenance of systems of social domination

Rejecting the structural determinism of Ferdinand de Saussure and Claude Lévi-Strauss, Bourdieu places as an alternative, language as a symbolic form in the context of the social, political and historical conditions in which it is found His concept of 'symbolic violence' is significant, in response to Marxist view, for describing the process by which arbitrary forms of domination are accepted as natural by individuals and groups Bourdieu prefers to use the concept of symbolic violence to signify embodied symbolic systems and, in comparison to Marxist view, he uses 'belief' rather than ideology to denote this phenomenon He also uses the term 'misrecognition' to designate the form of cognition that is involved in the process Bourdieu criticises Marx for reducing the social world to economic field alone

At the same time, however, Bourdieu places his serious reservations against the subjectivist perspectives like ethnomethodology, phenomenology, and dramaturgy, primarily due to their failure to historicise, contextualise and situate the interacting/performing actors, thus leaning exclusively towards subjectivism, altogether ignoring the objective bases of the symbolic He criticises ethnomethodology for attributing unjustified autonomy and importance to linguistic schemes Phenomenology, he felt, does not perceive, due to its being ahistorical and antigenetic, the social classification and social meanings in relation to social experiences in the course of which they are acquired, which Bourdieu argues, are always situated and dated Coming to dramaturgy, he feels that the truth of an interaction is never entirely concentrated in interaction Interaction owes its form to the objective structures, which have produced the disposition of interacting agents which allot them their relative positions in the interaction and elsewhere

Bourdieu's theory of 'field' is used by Lardinois to break away from macro-historical and sociological approaches to understand different national traditions of Indian knowledge He questions their homo-

genisation in a single western trend of oriental scholarship He concludes that Bourdieu's approach enables us to preserve the specificity of social and intellectual space in which the orientalist knowledge is produced The emergence of an autonomous academic space devoted to the study of non western civilisation may be understood as a combination of three basic factors first, the development of a market for a particular type of goods, that is, orientalist knowledge, second, the existence of a corps of specialists, the orientalists as scholars working within different disciplines and attached to particular erudite institutions, and third, learned societies and journals acting as agents of legitimation of the orientalist knowledge produced by those specialists The field of production of Indian discourses in the 1930s, according to Lardinois could be first divided into the 'savant' (dominant) pole and the 'mundane' (dominated) pole, and second, between the Catholic and the non-Catholic one There are the go-betweens too, mediating between the most opposed factions, the savants and the mundanes Lardinois goes on to explain the futility of homogenising all these differentiations in the content and contours of knowledge produced

Gisele Sapiro's paper examines the French literary field by focusing upon the relations between literature and politics during the period of German occupation in France These relations raise the issue of the limits of the autonomy of the literary field, and of the elements of heteronomy, that is, its dependency regarding different social spheres such as the state or the economic field Multiple Correspondence Analysis is used to show that the space of political choices in literary field appeared to be homologous to the positions the writers occupy in the literary field Consistent with Bourdieu's argument, there was an opposition between dominant and dominated writers A biographical comparison on the basis of qualitative analysis of case studies showed that literary reasons underlie the differences between two writers with similar habitus Thus, writers' political choices are strongly related to the position they occupy in the field However, literary reasons, causing differences between two writers may result into mediation that the literary field exerts on external social constraints Analysis of social role of writers led to the identification of four logics – 'moralism', 'scandal', 'aestheticism', and 'subversion' – which induce different types of mediation between literature and forms of politicisation Sapiro concludes that, while most dominant writers belonging to the pole of large circulation collaborated with the occupying forces, intellectual resistance was launched by young and dominated avant-garde poets with the help of communist militants

Francine Muel-Dreyfus reflects upon the political reconstruction of femininity and gender during the National Revolution that replaced the

Republican motto of 'Equality, Liberty, Fraternity' by 'Labour, Family, Fatherland' in France Through research, she tries to investigate the political stakes of the construction of womanhood by the state in a time of crisis It is argued that, while biological foundation of 'natural' differences between the sexes and the idea of irreducible differences between masculine and feminine 'destinies' should have been destroyed by individualism, egalitarianism and declaration of Human Rights, these, in fact, got nurtured with a focus on male/female hierarchies, as one of the foundational beliefs What happened was a formalisation of regime's view of womanhood, termed by Muel-Dreyfus as 'the culture of sacrifice' Mothers are mystically bound to sacrifice Gender subculture was reinforced by the State by declaring 'Mother's Day' signifying a 'rite of institution', thus creating 'symbolic violence', that is, a magical boundary between masculine and feminine In other words, the celebration of 'Mother's Day' on the last Sunday in May as a national holiday led to hierarchising the bodies, establishing gender sub-culture State, thus, connected public ritual and the call to order of private celebration As defined by Bourdieu, Mother's Day celebrated as a national day was a rite of legitimisation, that is, 'rite of institution', separation of men and women in space

Thapan uses Bourdieu's 'habitus', as 'a socialised subjectivity' for understanding feminine identity Her paper is an attempt to understand the constancy of habitus in women's experience wherein agency is contained in every attempt at breaking out It is argued that agency emerges from within the structures of power and emphasised that the reiterative structure of norms serves not only to consolidate a particular regime of discourse/power, but also as the means of its destabilisation Thapan talks about multiple subjectivities that inform women's constitution of their gendered identities in the multiple worlds they simultaneously inhabit, as well as points to the generative constituents of habitus itself Through a number of narratives by women placed in varying kinds of spaces with different kinds of performances in building their self identity, she argues that, while Bourdieu's habitus incorporates the open-ended nature of dispositions making room for modifying and reinforcing dispositions, her analysis brings out the tremendously significant agency in subjectively constituted agential acts, played out with authority and force, which are missing in Bourdieu's approach

Bourdieu's efforts to bring together the procedures traditionally belonging to the separate disciplines of sociology and ethnology are elaborated by Alban Bensa Bourdieu sets up against the objectivist option that insists on an external vision, one above all without any political action at stake He combines a genuine quantitative and

statistical sociology with a qualitative inquiry, which puts the accent on social categories of judgment and taste Bourdieu, while disputing all reasoning separating kinship as an object in itself, believed that 'Structuralist Objectivism' not only concealed the ambiguity of social realities, but also failed to explain their meanings Kinship relations instead of structured according to determinate rules, are constructed by people according to the practice principles, where the interest for the rule mingles with the individual interest Bourdieu's propositions generate a doubt regarding the homogeneity of the field and the constituent principles of its specificity and autonomy

Deepak Mehta brings out, quite meticulously, the exclusion of individual subjectivities in the description of violence as anonymous, irrational and perhaps incurable, with a particular focus on the Report of the Srikrishna Commission (1998) He contests the mapping of violence by ordering of the riot through dispositions, affidavits, testimonies, eye witness accounts, etc , without passing through the speaking subjects This way, violence is projected not as a problem of behaviour, but as a representation of disease Mehta shows, with the help of ethnographic accounts, how the very interpretation and understanding of violence gets enriched with the subjective reproduction of the phenomenon He is correct in making a case for an understanding of violence by preserving its contextual, subjective and individualised experiences by the victims, especially while tracing the perpetrators

The contributions to the volume are meticulously written, providing a critical view of some important ideas generated by Bourdieu and their application to the study of various contemporary issues The merit of the work lies in the fact that it not only enhances the understanding of the reader in relation to various concepts introduced by Bourdieu, apart from his methodological contribution, but also brings out the applicability of various concepts evolved by Bourdieu in the Indian context The editors and the contributors need to be congratulated for the tremendous job so effectively done

* Roland Lardinois and Meenakshi Thapan (eds) *Reading Pierre Bourdieu in a dual context Essays from India and France* New Delhi Routledge, an imprint of the Taylor and Francis Group, 2006, viii +313 pp Rs 695 (hb) ISBN 0-415-40114-3

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Book Reviews

Ananta Kumar Giri: *New horizons of social theory Conversations, transformations and beyond* Jaipur Rawat Publications, 2006, xxv + 347 pp , Rs 895 (hb) ISBN 81-316-0024-6

The book under review covers a diverse range of issues and ideas pertaining to knowledge of self and society in a novel conversational style 'reconnecting social theorising with the pressing social and political issues of our time', as Fred Dallmayr notes in the 'Introduction' (p xxi) On this point Ananta Kumar Giri's text is refreshingly outspoken

As the first Indian reprint of an earlier work titled *Conversations and Transformations Toward a New Ethics of Self and Society* (Maryland Lexington Books, 2002), Giri presents a collection of seventeen papers presented earlier in different conferences/symposia/seminars or published in anthologies/journals, in an apparently incoherent fashion, reflective of the artistic predisposition of his creative mind and a fairly deep philosophical diversity that he strives to unite in the present work

Despite presenting a multiplicity of distinct issues, for Dallmayr, 'the book's chapters coalesce into a crucial overall theme the need for personal self-transcendence as well as social and political renewal' (p xxiv) As Giri writes in the 'Preface', the book takes up several themes of normative conversation of contemporary relevance such as 'social criticism, cultural creativity, institutional well-being, self-development, dialogical democracy, civil society, social exclusion, identity politics and aesthetic ethics' (p ix) Accordingly, he puts here the celebrated western thinkers of the likes of Michel Foucault, Jaques Derrida, Levinas, Jurgen Habermas and Anthony Giddens in conversation with their Indian counterparts such as Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, Chittaranjan Das, André Béteille, Ashis Nandy, Amartya Sen and J P S Uberoi In consequence, the reader gets 'a truly cross-cultural exchange of ideas, as a stepping stone to that "dialogue of civilisations" so much needed today as an antidote to hegemonic monoculture' (p xxi)

Throughout the text, Giri questions, criticises and attempts to explore novel answers to the problems of social life with a scientific intent and artistic freedom in tandem One of the basic points of departure for Giri in the very first chapter surrounds a novel idea of criticism, as he argues, ' social criticism now needs to have an agenda of spiritual criticism that encompasses rational criticism an agenda of what can be called practical spirituality' (p 5) In the ensuing chapters, he arranges conversation between Kant and Gandhi on the issue of moral commitment and transformation of politics, Habermas and Tagore and Gandhi on an ethics of listening and quest for truth In Chapters 4 and 5, he presents the works and worlds of a non-metropolitan and non-systematic Oriya thinker and critique, Chittaranjan Das Universities, audited accountability, disciplinary boundaries, human and institutional well-being, dialogical inter-subjectivity, civil society, poverty are some of the themes Giri deals with in his characteristic East-West conversational style in the subsequent chapters

Shunning a rather conventional positivist stance of objective, value free social theory, Giri takes the side of the disadvantaged mass through a thoughtful critique of the basic premises of the project of modernity and postmodernism In several chapters of the book, he expresses his dissatisfaction with the ethical or moral deficiencies of contemporary social life and focuses on the need to go beyond a purely private moralism and to re-infuse the public domain with ethical sensibility Rather than trying to find piecemeal solutions to the plight of the marginalised, excluded and disadvantaged population through a progressivist project of their integration into existing structures, Giri underscores the need to transform and ethically redesign the existing structures themselves and opts for an ethics of servanthood that calls us to see ourselves as 'a humble, voluntary, and non-compromising maker of one's destiny' (p 337)

In tune with the conversational style, each chapter bears ample testimony of Giri as an avid reader, as the extensive use of quoted materials makes his arguments forceful Nevertheless, a thorough reading leaves the reader with a few unresolved confusions First, apparently, the title is a misnomer As the focus seems primarily philosophical, it could be better titled as a work of social philosophy At the same time, the grand overarching critical approach pursued by the author could better support its candidature as a treatise on critical philosophical theory Second, the conversational style and the frequent use of quotations potentially bear the risk of drawing its reader's attention to a host of new concepts and line of argumentation every now and then, distracting her/him from the central line of conversation that the author strives to

present in any particular chapter Third, persistent use of philosophical vocabulary and concepts such as 'interpenetration' (p 4), 'infrarational' or 'supramental' (p 5) and other jargons would appear strange to a social scientist representing a different disciplinary allegiance than philosophy and perhaps needs more systematic explanation by the author for better comprehensibility Consequent confusion is evident from a somewhat different connotation of the term 'Tapashya' that Fred Dallmayr arrives at ('the discipline of self-renunciation and austerity' [p xxii]) compared to Giri ('an act of concentrated seeking' [p 90]) Paradoxically, the author himself stands against such dominance of ornamental language in support of Chittaranjan Das' position (p 75) Fourth, the book being a collection of seminar papers and previously published articles, suffers from overlaps and lack of integration A clear scheme of grouping of chapters can better integrate and improve the work as a more coherent one in its future editions Fifth, and this seems more substantive, the author could explore contributions of some Indian thinkers and sociologists as Radhakamal Mukherjee, D P Mukherjee and Benoy Kumar Sarkar that could further strengthen his arguments Finally, the book needs some reworking in its future editions especially as regards proofreading, copyediting, referencing, and indexing

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Deepa Narayan (ed.): *Measuring empowerment Cross-disciplinary perspectives* New Delhi Oxford University Press, 2006, xx + 475 pp , Rs 650 (hb) ISBN 0-19568418-8

The concept of empowerment is generally focused on the poor We do not talk about empowerment of the rich The assumption is that wealth is a source of power, hence the rich are empowered in relation to the poor in the society This underlines the economic dimension of the concept of empowerment This may suggest that removing poverty should be the process of empowerment of the poor The concept of empowerment, however, takes empowerment as a starting point of poverty alleviation The main contention of the empowerment thesis is that empowerment of the poor leads to poverty alleviation and poverty alleviation strengthens the empowerment process further

Empowerment is a multidimensional process in which the economic dimension is obviously important But the concept of empowerment does

not assume economic dimension as the causal factor of empowerment, rather, it lays emphasis on non-economic determinants of empowerment The vagueness of this concept emanates from this multi-dimensionality and interconnections among various dimensions of empowerment Any attempt to make the concept of empowerment more precise is welcome The book under review, which is based on proceedings of an international interdisciplinary workshop organised by the World Bank's Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Network, is one such

The nineteen chapters of this book are organised under five sections Apart from the introductory section on concepts and methods, and a section on subjective aspect of empowerment, the concept of empowerment has been dealt with at three different levels – namely, household, community, and nation – in three separate sections Covering the diverse aspects of empowerment is both strength and weakness of this book Strength because it is so widespread in its coverage and its weakness emanates from the fact that at the end of it the reader does not get a better understanding of empowerment

It is impossible to do justice to all the contributions that have enriched this book I will selectively comment on some parts of the book World Bank's President James Wolfensohn observes in the 'Foreword' 'Poor people have imagination, gut, knowledge, experience, deep motivation to move out of poverty [ ] They long to belong and participate in their communities on an equal footing with others ' His praise for the poor sounds more like the utterance of a hypocrite politician to woo the electorate and does not fit well in an academic publication

The introductory chapter on 'Conceptual Framework and Methodological Challenges' includes more than a six-page long 'Guide to Chapters' reflecting the clumsiness of the coverage of the book The contributors have addressed the topic of empowerment from their diverse positions and approaches Thus, though many important things have been said, to a reader who is looking for a better comprehension of the concept of empowerment, the diverse good arguments do not help much

Section Two on 'Gender and Household', consisting of three papers, addresses the important issue of empowerment of women It is widely believed that spreading education among women would enable them to get employment which, in turn, would empower them As a policy suggestion this overlooks the fact that in India, and some other less developed countries, among the poor households, women are earners and it is mainly their income that is supporting those families In spite of this, women are far from empowered in such families, the girl child, for instance, even faces negligence in those families The question remains,

what then empowers women? Is reservation of seats for women in various political bodies like local self-government and state and central legislatures a fruitful way of empowering women? The papers in this section are not of much help in answering such questions Of course, in the paper titled 'Measuring Women's Empowerment Learning from Cross-National Research', K O Mason has highlighted some important points like relational nature of empowerment, that empowerment is a group-based multidimensional process, and forming collectivities contributes towards empowerment

While dealing with empowerment at the community level, Norman Uphoff identifies six factors of power, namely, economic, social, political, informational, moral, and physical He also demonstrates with the help of a case study how empowerment has brought economic benefits to the poor

The book makes some other important points on impact of empowerment at national level Ashutosh Varshney, for instance, makes an interesting point that democracy's performance in poverty alleviation is limited as democracies are more inclined to direct approach to poverty alleviation which is not as effective as indirect, growth-based method, which has limited political appeal Though many such gems are scattered in this book, the weakness of this book lies in its failure to provide a comprehensive conceptualisation of empowerment, by threading those gems together

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Jaan Valsiner: *Culture in minds and societies Foundations of cultural psychology* New Delhi Sage Publications India Private Limited, 2007, 430 pp , Rs 750 (hb) ISBN 978-0-7619-3582-7

Viewing culture as a dynamic, inter-subjectively constructed reality is at the core of cultural psychology This view finds a novel treatment in the explicit semiotic basis that Jaan Valsiner brings to it In the manner of proponents of cultural psychology, who often distinguish the sub-discipline from the more pervasive, mainstream cross-cultural psychology, Valsiner persistently considers traditional psychological treatments of a wide range of social phenomena before presenting these through his own brand of cultural psychology His cultural psychology draws heavily from semiotics as also from sociology, anthropology, and history

Cross-cultural psychology sees culture as a stable external entity that members belong to, with each member possessing all the features of the culture in varying quantities Valsiner, however, presents culture as a dynamic system of signs (holding meanings) that people create under the guidance of other human beings who are collectively guided by different social institutions Furthermore, these semiotic structures are affect-laden – a person makes sense of the world or experiences the world through values and feelings which are themselves culturally organised It is in these affective semiotic fields that the personal negotiation of collective meanings occurs Here, there is bi-directionality of culture transfer, a constant dialectic of internalisation and externalisation

A core theme in Valsiner's conceptualisation of psychological and social phenomena, which recurs in the range of phenomena addressed in the eight chapters of the book, is his focus on *dialogical* models of explanation of these phenomena Here, ways of being of societies and persons are explained in terms of the dynamic process between opposites embedded within the same whole – the idea of *inclusive* separation of distinct properties or the idea of separation *with* rather than separation *from* Thus, for instance, in contrast to mainstream psychology's essentialistic characterisation of societies in monologic static terms such as individualism or collectivism, Valsiner proposes understanding society as the dynamic processes that lead to the whole range of positions between individualism and collectivism existing within the same whole Likewise, all human activity can be understood as a constant dialectics between the opposing but unified poles of construction and destruction Valsiner gives the example of a child drawing on a sheet of paper – there is creation of an image, destruction of paper Again, rather than a core self, Valsiner gives the example of Hubert Herman's dialogic self with its many I-positions, each with its own voice and each of which can be occupied by an individual moving through the imaginal landscape of the semiotic field Thus, the idea of 'belonging to a society or a culture' of 'being of a certain type' is problematised, since each person is a perpetual migrant moving among individually created and appropriated social rules and norms

According to Valsiner, it is monologism that leads traditional psychology to tautologically confuse description with causal explanation, thus, individualistic behaviour stems from individualism, which is defined in terms of individualistic behaviour On the other hand, Valsiner's dialogical models of psychological and social reality allows for a distancing from the perceivable characteristics or the particular context and makes for generalisability, an aim consistently upheld by Valsiner as of central importance to the social sciences Valsiner's idea of dialogic models and

the unity of opposites is well argued and does serve well his aim of generalisable models of social and psychological phenomena which, as he rightfully claims, have been largely absent from mainstream psychological approach to the self and culture with its focus on description However, his core ideas and models are hardly groundbreaking, the same ideas find different faces in many cultural psychological theories What is unusual is the breadth of his coverage which touches upon subjects as varied as the status of women in societies, mythology, prejudice, colonialism, polyandry, pilgrimage, communication, war and genocide, to the favourite topics of psychologists – thinking and feeling

Although Valsiner ambitiously attempts to map all of these on to the same canvas, with his semiotic theory of culture as the integrating background, it is here that the book stumbles It would seem that the breadth of his vision is not matched by the techniques used to present them, leaving the reader often floundering amongst an unmanageable mass of ideas Reading the book, I often found myself having to search in earnest for (or make up for myself!) the manner in which what is being discussed fit into the whole Some of the basic techniques that mark good writing are surprisingly absent The introductions to chapters tell little about what they deal with Again, surprisingly, the 'Preface' does not have those usual and extremely useful signposts directing the reader to the terrain covered in the different chapters The reader is further incapacitated in this by the use of language that is often florid and arcane This is not to deny certain redeeming features of the presentation – the use of metaphors to present complex ideas and the deft weaving in of concrete examples from anthropology to illustrate abstract semiotics – which, in the final call, saves the book from tedium This is a book that demands some training and grounding in formal semiotics, sociologists or psychologists may find themselves out of their depth when the analysis is as abstract as it often is

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M.V. Nadkarni: *Hinduism A Gandhian perspective* (2nd edition) New Delhi Ane Books India, 2008, xxxiv + 510 pp . Rs 395 (pb) ISBN 81-8052-287-3

With a billion followers spread all over the world, Hinduism is today indeed a world religion Many books, encyclopaedic surveys, compa-

nions, readers and handbooks have appeared on this religion in recent years in India and abroad A scholarly journal, *The International Journal of Hindu Studies* is now in its twelfth year Not only scholars of religion, but also interested and gifted authors from other fields have contributed to this growing body of literature In 2004, Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan, Mumbai, published a comprehensive book, *Hindu Civilization and the Twenty First Century*, by a senior (retired) railway official, V Ramanathan

The book under review is a similar praiseworthy effort to present Hinduism to the interested general reader The author M V Nadkarni is a well-known economist who was Professor at the Institute for Social and Economic Change, Bangalore, Vice Chancellor of the Gulbarga University, and National Fellow of the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) In fact, the present book was written by him while holding the ICSSR Fellowship For an economist, he has a wide range of interests including philosophy and religion

Disclaiming that he is writing for 'the pundits' (p xxv), Nadkarni draws pointed attention to the need for a comprehensive and readily comprehensible book for the general reader and, in particular, for Hindu migrants who live abroad (there are over one and a half million of them in North America alone), and often search for their cultural roots Written in an accessible and authoritative style, the book is the product of impressive library research and personal knowledge Primarily based on classical (Sanskrit) and regional vernacular (Kannada) literary traditions, Nadkarni also draws upon modern (western and Indian) scholarship The list of references runs on 21 pages The author has not, however, drawn very much from ethnographic studies of Hinduism in its 'lived' versions, because the sheer variety of the same is, he thinks, likely to create a dazzle resulting in the wood getting lost among the trees

While I agree that the reviewer's task is to evaluate what the author set out to accomplish, rather than to speculate about what he or she might have written, I do think that the religious life of a people comes alive only when we focus on what they do, as has been done by several generations of sociologists and social anthropologists I have in mind books such as M N Srinivas's *Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India* (1952), K S Mathur's *Caste and Ritual in Malwa* (1964), L A Babb's *The Divine Hierarchy* (1975), Ann Grodzin Gold's *Fruitful Journeys* (1987), and C F Fuller's masterly overview of ethnographic literature in *The Camphor Flame* (1992) While the first four titles (and many others like them) do not find a place in Nadkarni's bibliography, Fuller's book is included but not utilized From the point of view of the

readers of the *Sociological Bulletin*, this omission is, perhaps, grievous But one understands the author's quest for essentials and his wish to be accessible

As for modern (western) and contemporary (Hindutva) writings, Nadkarni rightly draws attention to the widely acknowledged prejudices of Orientalist writings and Hindu revivalist (particularly Hindutva) interpretations of India's (so-called) national culture But it must also be pointed out that it is not quite fair to brush under the carpet of Orientalism learned and insightful studies of Hinduism by such distinguished western scholars as R C Zachner of England (*Hinduism*, 1962), Madeleine Biardeau of France (*Hinduism*, 1989), or Axel Michaels of Germany (*Hinduism*, 2001) Incidentally, Zaehner has devoted an immensely valuable chapter to Gandhi ('Yudhishthira Returns', pp 224-53) The extension of Edward Said's thesis about the Middle East (West Asia) to South Asia without qualification is problematic Nineteenth-century Hindus – Rammohan Roy, Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, Vivekananda, and others (all mentioned in Chapter 10 of the book) – played a significant role in the shaping of thinking about Hinduism in their time

And so did Gandhi – perhaps more than anybody else – in the 20th century Gandhi, who was no recluse and drew his inspiration from everywhere, is Nadkarni's inspiration He calls the Gandhian perspective 'most authentic' (p xvii), a judgement which a pluralist like Gandhi might perhaps have found troublesome, given his explicit support to the Jain theory of the 'many-sidedness of reality' (*anekantavad*) Very appropriately, Nadkarni focuses on Gandhi's notion of Sanatan Dharma as his point of departure, which stood for a non-denominational, non-sectarian, transcendental moral code for everybody, not only the Hindus to follow Furthermore, to follow a religion did not mean for Gandhi suspension of the obligation to apply the test of moral reason and ultimately conscience (the inner voice) to received tradition Whatever was thus judged *sanatan* (eternal, true) was, therefore, not a dead frozen stock, but a live flowing river The cover design of the book features a river, 'a good metaphor for Hinduism, according to the author Gandhi saw Truth and God as one, and since God was in everyone, Nadkarni notes, 'non-violence and respect for others become the basic content of dharma' (p 5) Beginning with the Gandhian valorisation of Truth, the author derives from it the traditional theology of Truth-Goodness-Beauty, and proceeds to identify *bhakti marga* as an ancient spiritual path Throughout the book, Nadkarni turns time and again to Gandhi for insights, and in this indeed lies the distinctiveness of the book

After the introductory discussion (Chapter 1) on the basic ideas of Hinduism (including the notions of *dharma, karma* and *purushartha*), Nadkarni turns (in Chapter 2) to 'demolishing a myth', namely, the alleged internal relation of entailment between Hinduism and the caste system Once again he draws upon Gandhi ('caste has nothing to do with religion' and 'must go if both Hinduism and India are to live and grow' [pp 77, 118]), but does not hesitate to disagree with him when it comes to the issue of *varnas*, which Gandhi accepted as functionally useful Nadkarni maintains that neither *varnas* nor *jatis* are intrinsic to Hinduism Sociologists have a different approach to such questions, searching neither for essentials nor origins, but focusing on function Incidentally, Nadkarni misunderstands Dumont's position while it is correct that for Dumont the 'dysjunction' between status and power is crucial to our understanding of the caste system (pp 79, 105), it is not correct to say that for him there is no 'correlation' between Hinduism and the caste system The hierarchical superiority of status over power is, in fact, based on the key criterion of ritual purity, which is a *religious value*, acknowledged, Dumont asserts, even by lower castes

Chapters 3 to 6 are devoted to the 'dynamics of Hinduism', dividing the history of Hinduism into ancient, medieval, and modern phases Such periodisation is, of course, a hallmark of western historiography Personally, I found Chapter 5, which is devoted to *bhakti* movements, of great interest with the exploration of regional variations The historical 'importance' of *bhakti* lies, the author tells us, in its promotion of, among other things, 'a sound ethical basis for Hinduism on non-sectarian and non-casteist lines' (p 278) The question that arises here is, why was this development of 'great importance' if caste was not 'intrinsic' to Hinduism

Chapter 7 discusses the 'Hindu approach to development' It is gratifying that the kind of arguments that used to be put forward earlier (one recalls the formulations of economists like Vera Anstey, Vikas Mishra, and even Gunnar Myrdal) have now been largely laid aside New arguments proceed along discursive (what was possible) or empirical (what happened) paths. I have a preference for the latter, so I guess would economists generally Arvind Sharma may have made an interesting comparison between the notion of 'calling' among the Puritans and the concept of *svadharma* in the Bhagavad Gita (p 382), the obvious point rather is that the nature of the Mughal and colonial economies was more relevant to understanding economic stagnation in colonial India than the Hindu scriptures Deepak Lal's approach (p 380) is the right one

In the concluding chapter, Nadkarni addresses the issue of the 'future of religion' For him, 'Religion is a basic necessity perhaps next only to food, clothing and shelter' (p 416) Everything else follows from this basic dogma, it is not a demonstration For the sociologist, the task is to show the cultural, social and political entailments of the persistence or resurgence of religion as faith, on the one hand, and as a political ideology (the quest of power), on the other But, then, Nadkarni does not claim to have written for sociologists or scholars of religion He has accomplished very well the task he set himself

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Rudolf C. Heredia: *Changing gods Rethinking conversion in India* New Delhi Penguin Books, 2007, xiii + 386 pp , Rs 350 (pb) ISBN 0-14310-190-0

Although Rudolf Heredia has painstakingly tried to present the different dimensions of conversion – as *adharma*, as interrogation, as dedication, to my mind, it stands for one word, that is, denial a denial of the self, of the existing faith, and of the system Even the word 'conversion', originally from the Latin '*convertere*' means 'to turn around' or 'turn completely' In a way, denial or conversion itself becomes a form of protest

In addition to the beautiful cover page of the book which shows Akbar holding discussions in the *Ibadat Khana*, Heredia's attempt to perceive conversion from the point of view of the converts is an added attraction of the book In the chapter on 'Personal Journeys', conversion is perceived as a personal choice involving a rejection, a change or an adaptation of one's identity The case studies focus on exploring religious conversion in diverse contexts and the persons chosen are well-known historical figures (for example, Ambedkar, Gandhi, Ramabai, and Nivedita) with their own understanding of religious conversion Though Ambedkar had announced at Yeola on 13 October 1935 that, 'It was not my fault that I was born an untouchable But I am determined that I will not die a Hindu', Heredia argues that Ambedkar did not really convert, his conversion is an *atmaparivartan*, not a *dharmanatar* For Ambedkar, conversion as a 'gateway to respect' was a struggle for liberation from caste oppression, to which Gandhi had responded with the statement, 'religion is not like a house or a cloak which can be changed at will'

Gandhi was equally appalled at institutionally organised efforts at conversion, especially to Christianity, which was viewed by him as 'Europeanisation of the converts' He says, 'the moment a person turns Christian, he becomes a *Saheb log* He almost changes his nationality ' Unlike Ambedkar, who passionately appealed the dalits to change their religion through his poem *'Mukti Kon Pathe?'* (What Path Freedom?), Gandhi did not approve of religious conversion as a path for dalits seeking to better themselves

The case studies highlight the point that conversion is not a simple exercise, it is not just about personal choices, since religious identities never exist in isolation but are embedded in social situations At the same time, conversion is certainly not by force For example, the sword of Islam as the principle instrument of conversion does not stand up to geographical facts Whereas the largest period of Muslim rule was at the centre of its dominance in the north around Delhi, it was not here but in the peripheral areas of east Bengal and in the north-west that Islam became a majority religion Surely, if conversions were mainly by force, then the majority of them should have been in and around the centre of Muslim power, where force could more easily induce the local population

In fact, the '*cuius regio, eius religio*' (the ruler imposes his religion) is being revived by an articulation of 'majoritarian' rule In the modern world, where numbers and majority/minority game has intensified, especially when the majority religion is politically dominant, not surprisingly, conversion to another religious tradition is seen as an ultimate betrayal and as positively anti-national

Where does the solution lie? Certainly not in passing laws aimed at curbing conversions To defuse tensions, Heredia advocates rethinking religious conversion with a determined religious disarmament, discarding aggression But this well-meaningful solution is far from reality On the contrary, in a world of 'multiple identities', where the fundamentalists are bent upon having a single, inflexible, and rigid identity, religion will be the focal point, making 'nationalism' and 'patriotism' archaic words, whose meaning to be sought only in a dictionary

Overall, the attractive cover of the book cannot compensate for its loose framework and repetitive arguments The author claims to have presented his arguments 'less as a linear one-dimensional development than a circular reiteration' How I wish he would have done just the opposite!

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Shubh Mathur: *The everyday life of Hindu nationalism An ethnographic account* Gurgaon (Haryana) Three Essays Collective, 2008, xv + 222 pp , Rs 275 (pb) ISBN 81-88789-53-4

This well-researched book on *Hindutva* or Hindu Nationalism makes our head bend in shame Do those who swear by *Hindutva*, and claim to make India strong, realise the harm they are doing to the standing of the country and the reputation of the very religion – Hinduism – which they claim to defend? Shubh Mathur's purpose is not just to write a scientific treatise, but to expose this malady In this task, she has succeeded eminently

Though there are several references in the book to the post-Godhra 'riots' in Gujarat in 2002, the main focus of the book and Mathur's ethnographic account is on Rajasthan, covering the years of BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) rule from 1989 to 1998 and then again from 2003 onwards However, the book goes beyond a mere ethnographic account of RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) activities and raises larger analytical issues

There have been many books bitterly critical of *Hindutva*, but this one has a place of its own It does not consider the incidents of violence against Muslims as sporadic outbursts On the contrary, they are viewed as an outcome of long planned preparation, particularly in the arena of culture This is seen from Mathur's documentation of the everyday life of RSS and its activities and its 'character building' She alleges, on the basis of her extensive and careful fieldwork, that this 'character building' takes the form of systematically teaching not only hatred against particular minorities especially Muslims, but also translating this hatred into violent action whenever an occasion arises

Mathur rejects all explanations of such violence which might directly and indirectly justify it For instance, she rejects the 'formula of balanced and equally apportioned guilt' assigning blame equally between the 'two sides' Her reason for this is that the victims are almost always overwhelmingly Muslims What is worse, they are so helpless that the police are most often ineffective and look the other way Rajasthanis may, however, find it difficult to accept blaming only Hindu communalism, particularly after the recent serial blasts in Jaipur by terrorists on 13 May 2008, not to mention the earlier blasts in Ajmer Merely because there is no similar investigative ethnographic account of *madarasa*s and teaching of *jehadi* ideology does not mean that the guilt is only on one side However, the more important point is that a majority community has a special responsibility in maintaining peace, and violence by one party can never justify vindictive violence by another party It only generates a

vicious circle of violence, and does not solve the problem The way Pandits of Kashmir were treated and hounded out of their state where they were in minority, can never justify similar treatment of minorities by Hindus elsewhere

Mathur rejects the popular explanation for the rise of *Hindutva*, in terms of 'Islamicisation' of Hinduism It takes for granted that Hindus are intrinsically 'tolerant' while Muslims are 'fanatical' and 'intolerant', which is misleading She gives several historical instances of Muslim rulers' tolerance towards their subjects and non-Muslims, and argues rightly that such stereotyping has no historical basis

Mathur does not also believe in an economic explanation of anti-Muslim violence, in terms of economic rivalries or competition for limited economic opportunities, including employment The alleged appeasement of minorities by the government would also offer no convincing explanation, because had there been such appeasement, the social and economic position of Muslims would have been much better The hollowness of 'appeasement of Muslims' as a theory becomes most evident during communal riots, when the police are reluctant to act decisively

Mathur's only explanation for Hindu violence lies in the sustained indoctrination of mass of people by *Hindutva* forces, covering even the so-called lower castes, dalits and tribal people The lower strata join hands with *Hindutva* and take lead in attacking Muslims because, this, they believe, would raise their status in the eyes of upper-caste Hindus and enable them to enjoy the spoils of power

The book leaves two important questions unanswered Its explanation of violence in terms of sustained and planned indoctrination is begging the question Why should there be such indoctrination to make Hindu masses militant, and why does it succeed? Or, why did in the first instance *Hindutva* forces emerge at all? The second question is if there is a solution to the problem, what it is, or at least in what direction it lies

It is believed that *Hindutva* emerged only to strengthen upper-caste hegemony But the caste composition of *Hindutva* leadership has undergone change after independence in favour of the lower castes There may be other reasons When I finished reading this book, I could not help recalling a well-known book, *Lajja*, by Taslima Nasreen, which gives the counterpart story of how Hindus in Bangladesh faced a similar situation Nasreen was hounded out of the country and faced death threats She sought refuge in India, but she was ousted from India too, since the Government of India did not want to hurt Muslim sentiments But this apart, *Lajja* indicates that communal violence has to be seen in the South Asian context and not in the context of Gujarat or Rajasthan or India

alone In spite of our long civilisational history, we are yet to respect human rights including minority rights Instead of doing away with the environment of hatred, we tend to feel that atrocities against minorities in Pakistan and Bangladesh justify atrocities against minorities in India Unless we get out of the vicious mindset of mutual vindictiveness, there would be no solution to this problem Governments of all the countries in the subcontinent should enter into a binding mutual agreement that the human rights of minorities in every country would be strictly safeguarded. The majority-community organisations should be involved in this civil responsibility A particular community may be a majority in one country, but a minority elsewhere Every community in this globalising world has to realise that, if, as a minority, its human rights have to be respected in a given country, it has also the obligation of respecting the minority rights in other countries where it is in majority Hindus have to realise that, if they, as a majority, ride roughshod over minorities in India, they will have no right to protest in other countries where they have to live as a minority

This book should be taken as a strong moral critique of the majoritarian mindset and its dire consequences on the minority in any country, even if its setting is in Rajasthan, India

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Tulsi Patel (ed.): *Sex-selective abortion in India Gender, society and new reproductive technologies* New Delhi Sage Publications India Private Limited, 2007, 432 pp , Rs 495 (pb) ISBN 0-7619-3539-8

Preference for the male child has always been an integral part of Indian Society History provides evidence of female foeticide and infanticide, infanticide, and neglect and discrimination of the girl child The book under review, containing 11 papers, explores different aspects of sex-selective abortions from the gender perspective Most of the papers are based on empirical studies, and rich primary data add to their authenticity Tim Dyson's forward is superb

Part I contains four papers, including a lucid introduction by the editor, Tulsi Patel Leela Visaria's paper, outcome of an empirical study conducted in Gujarat and Haryana, highlights the magnitude of deficit girls in India Some stunning facts from the 2001 Census are provided by

her She has substantiated the prevalence of adverse sex ratio in richer districts, urban areas and among the better-off sections of the population She has analysed variables like women's education, caste, women's activity, land ownership and the birth order

Ashish Bose has coined the acronym '*DEMARU*', that is, 'daughter eliminating male aspiring rage for ultrasound' He shows how undergoing sex-determination test is like 'getting blood tests for malaria parasites' The subtitle of his paper – Mixing up Family Planning with Females Foeticide' – opens a different outlook and argument His shows that female foeticide is dependent on available facilities, such as ultra sound, genetic tests, transport networks, and road connectivity Ramuka Dagar questions the very perspective of development, and argues that education, caste, class, access to health facilities, access to development, and prosperity fail to establish or bring gender equity in India While analysing the gender equality index of Himachal Pradesh, she shows that, while gender enjoys increasing equality on the development parameters, female foeticide also increases

Part II of the book contains four papers which focus on the social milieu in which NRTs (new reproductive technologies) have been introduced, thereby contributing to the declining girl population in India Tulsi Patel examines the patriarchal social structure, persistent stereotyped gender roles in the family, and the mind set of people in inducing foeticide She laments that unfavourable gender-biased customs of the upper castes, emulated by the rich middle-caste and lower-caste people, contribute to female foeticide

Alpana Sagar's essay, an outcome of her study in a Delhi slum, discusses the social context like poverty, devaluation of women's work, and poor self-image, and social pressures She concludes by stating 'we need to question our very paradigm of development' (p 199) Reema Bhatia's paper provides useful ethnographic data focusing on how health workers alter their attitude and actions to suit the social needs of the people, clearing the ground for sex determination and female foeticide in Punjab Rashmi Kapoor's paper deals with adoption agencies in Delhi, and reveals that there is a steady increase in the adoption of girls in India She explains the role of counselling in bringing favourable changes in the attitude of the people towards sex of the child

Part III of the book deals with intervention by the state and society in combating foeticide L S Vishwanath documents the practice of female infanticide by some caste groups during the colonial period to avoid payment of dowry and to maintain social status Vibhuti Patel's emphasises the dynamics of missing girls She examines the maladies of NRTs and their implications for and repercussions on women She argues that

budgetary provision on health has a hidden agenda of NRT She also highlights the protests of various associations demanding the banning of NRTs for sex determination and sex pre-selection

Tulsi Patel deserves kudos for her novel attempt to discuss fertility patterns in India She shows how the state has intervened in the culture of reproduction in society after independence She provides a critical evaluation of five decades of family planning programme and the changing mindset of the masses Four appendices provide useful data pertaining to various issues concerning female foeticide

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Books Received

Anandalakshmy, S , Nandita Chaudhary and Neerja Sharma (eds) *Researching families and children Culturally appropriate methods* New Delhi Sage Publications India Private Limited, 2008

Hussain, Monirul *Interrogating development State, displacement and popular resistance in north east India* (SAGE Studies on India's North East) New Delhi Sage Publications India Private Limited, 2008

Madan, G R (ed) *Radhakamal Mukerjee An eminent scholar, saint and social worker* New Delhi Radha Publications, 2008

Sahni, Rohini, V Kalyan Shankar and Hemant Apte (eds) *Prostitution and beyond an analysis of sex work in India* New Delhi Sage Publications India Private Limited, 2008

Guidelines for Contributors

1 *Sociological Bulletin* welcomes original articles Articles (not exceeding 6 000-8,000 words) must be typed on one side of the paper, double-spaced with wide margins on all four sides An abstract (not exceeding 100 words) must accompany the article

2 In the first instance, send only the hard copy of the typescript (two copies) If the article is accepted for publication, the contributor(s) will be required to send the soft copy of the article as an Email attachment processed on MSWord for Windows

3 Within the text, adopt the author-date method of citation minus the comma, for example, (Lobo 2002) If more than one work of an author is cited, separate the years of publication with a comma (Pandey 1996, 1999) Separate the page numbers of citations by a colon (Uberoi 2002 264) and hyphenate the inclusive numbers (Uberoi 2002 264-65) When more than one author is cited, the entries should be chronological with works of different authors separated by a semicolon (Omvedt 1990, Hasan 1994, Mayaram 1997) For co-authored works, cite both names (Jayal and Pai 2001), for works authored by three or more authors, use '*et al* ' after the first name (Patel *et al* 2002) If a citation is repeated within a paragraph without intervening citations, use *ibid* instead of repeating the author's name again and provide the relevant page number(s) (*ibid* 32) If gazetteers, reports and works of governmental organisations and other institutions are cited, mention the name of the organisation/institution sponsoring the publication in the citation, fully spelt out at its first occurrence (Government of India 2003), and use its abbreviation/acronym in subsequent citations (GOI 2003)

4 Give separately the bibliographic details of all works cited in the article under **References** in the following sequence (a) Article the name(s) of the author(s), the year of publication, title of the article (within single inverted commas), the name of the journal (italicised), and the volume number, the issue number, and the beginning and ending page numbers (b) Chapter in an edited work or compilation the name(s) of the author(s), the year of publication title of the chapter (within single inverted commas), the name(s) of the editor(s)/compiler(s), title of the book (italicised), the beginning and ending page numbers of the chapter place of publication and the name of the publisher (c) Book the name(s) of the author(s), the year of publication, title of the book (italicised), place of publication, and the name of the publisher The listing in References must follow the alphabetical order of the last name of the (first) author For illustrations, see any recent issue of the *Bulletin*

5 *Sociological Bulletin* follows the endnote pattern Serialise all explanatory notes in the sequence in which they are referred to in the text (using numbered superscripts) and place them at the end of the text under **Notes**, but before **References** Endnotes must not be used for bibliographic purposes

6 Tables, charts, maps, figures, etc are to be placed separately at the end of the article Number these serially, with appropriate titles/captions Refer to them in the text by their number – Table 5, Figure 2, Map 1, etc – and not by their location–for example, the above table, the figure below, etc

7 Cite sentences or words taken from other works with single quotation marks, use double quotation marks only within quotations Separate quotations exceeding fifty words from the text and indent them on the left Unless the entire sentence is part of the quotation, the punctuation must remain outside the quotation marks

8 Use British, rather than American spellings (labour, not labor, programme not program) Similarly, use 's', rather than 'z', in 'ise', 'ising' 'isation' words Authors have latitude as regards italicisation, but italicisation needs to be consistent in the article

9 Write numerals between one and ninety-nine in words, and 100 and above in figures However the following are to be in figures only distance 3 km, age 32 years old, percentage 64 per cent, and years 1990s

10 Contributors are required to provide on a separate sheet their name, designation, official address and Email ID Only articles which have not been published earlier or which are not being considered for publication elsewhere will be entertained A declaration to this effect must be included in the covering letter

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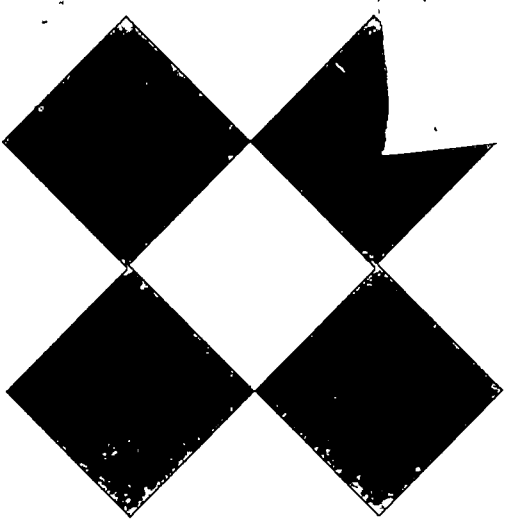

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Intra-community Dissent and Dialogue: The Bombay Parsis and the Zoroastrian Diaspora*

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This article explores the tension between the local and transnational communities through a discussion of the Bombay Parsis and their relationship with the Zoroastrian diaspora in the West It demonstrates how developments in both locations mutually interact and shape changes in perceptions and attitudes Current formulations of 'community' stress its harmony and unity The Parsi Zoroastrian case, in contrast, suggests that internal dissent is a positive feature influencing the content of 'community' In this contestation, positions are broadly classified as 'conservative' versus 'liberal' in the Mumbai context, and 'traditionalist' versus 'fundamentalist' in the diaspora The article tracks the debates and their interlinkages, through the various formal and informal fora in which they are expressed

[Keywords Bombay Parsis, identity, internal dissent, transnational community, Zoroastrian diaspora]

Introduction: What Constitutes Community among the Parsis?

The heightened trend among diaspora communities to connect with co-ethnics in multiple locations and in the home country is a noteworthy feature of ongoing processes of globalisation Such 'connect' – in effect leading to transnationality – can be of different orders exchange of resources, information, ideas, visits, sponsoring relatives, marriage links, and so on While such exchanges did take place to varying extents in the historical trajectories of many diasporas, the scale of connectivity and the availability of conceptual space for accommodating multiple affiliations

mark the current moment as exceptional To be transnational means to belong to two or more societies at the same time (Vertovec 2005 3) Transmigrants or migrants whose lived experiences transcend the boundaries of nation states and who develop and maintain multiple relationships – familial, economic, social, organisational, religious, and political – that span these borders, are an important element in transnational processes (Blanc *et al* 1995 684) The growth of viable transnational communities, both material and virtual, bears out recent theorisations that try to decouple 'community' from 'locality'

Conceptualisations and theorisations on community have gone through several phases Till fairly recently, the inspiration of classical sociology via Emile Durkheim led to a dominant preoccupation with integration as the key function of community (Cohen 1985 20) The other motif in delineations of community was to see it as characteristic of pre-industrial and pre-modern societies, the opposition between *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft* as formulated by Ferdinand Tonnies being its inspiration (Delanty 2003 25-34) In either case, the defining feature was locality, that is, community as a spatially bounded, limited entity larger than the kinship group but smaller and less impersonal than the bureaucracy or the work place By moving the concept from the realm of the physical and institutional to that of symbol, meaning, and identity, social theorists like Anthony Cohen (1985) and Benedict Anderson (1991) have been able to theoretically capture the new empirical realities of the intensification of community-based identities This body of work throws light on the constructed nature of community, its shifting boundaries, and its compatibility with modernity To paraphrase Cohen (1985 14), communities are symbolically constructed, and their subjective meanings are in part supplied by those who construct and live in them

It is this dialectical tension between the concrete, local community and the transnational community which apparently overcomes locality that is explored in this article A discussion of the 'Bombay Parsis' and their relationship with the Zoroastrian diaspora in the West offers a vivid illustration of the continuing validity of 'locality' as a binding structural factor despite the growing clout of the transnational community It also shows how developments in both home country and in the diaspora mutually interact, affect each other, and shape changes in perceptions and attitudes Research on diaspora in terms of social relations generally locates itself in the triadic relationship of diasporic community, host, and home (Sheffer 1986) A consideration of 'home' conventionally entails researching its impact on the diaspora via the notions of cultural memory and reinvention of tradition Current developments in the Zoroastrian diaspora alert us to the need for looking at the impact of the diaspora

'back home' and at the erasure of boundaries between 'home' and diaspora at certain junctures

At another level, the Parsi case also allows us to consider internal dissent as a positive feature that can, in fact, define the content of 'community' Currently, the two popular conceptions of the community are as a harmonious, anchoring unit, and its obverse, as an exclusive unit, mobilising members to act on its behalf vis-à-vis others Both views stress on its capacity to act as a unity Internal dissent seems to disrupt this capacity, and therefore, a definition predicated solely upon this capacity is a fragile one Among the Parsi Zoroastrians, the content and boundaries of 'community' are being internally contested in a vigorous – even volatile – manner. It is my point that this debate itself, arguably recognisable as dialogue, constitutes the dominant content of community at this time Here, community is neither a cooperative nor coercive unit Instead, it is contestation that plays a role in the making of community The conflict over some aspects – acceptance of new entrants via conversion or intermarriage, and the distinctive mode of disposal of the dead – actually underlines the fact, that in many other aspects, a common heritage is accepted In this dialogue, actual positions are complex, but broadly all parties situate themselves within the canvas of Zoroastrianism, laying claim to its heritage Parsi 'liberals' argue that they go back to Zarathustra himself, rather than on later interpretations, which, they say, the 'conservatives' do Within the Zoroastrian diaspora in the West, a similar division exists between the 'fundamentalists' and the 'traditionalists' I have tracked these two sets of debates through the various formal and informal fora in which they are expressed I have also interviewed a cross-section of 'Bombay Parsis' in the wake of the 2003 resolution by six High Priests which took the debate on community boundaries to a new peak I have reflected on the ways the diaspora and the 'Bombay Parsis' are interacting in mutually evolving the content of community

The Parsi case is important in another sense too in the context of India's religious pluralism as well as the many examples of coercive power of religious and caste communities and the lack of intra-community dissension The long standing struggle of Asghar Ali Engineer for internal democracy among Dawoodi Bohras is a striking example of one individual questioning the hold of another individual – an autocratic leader – over an entire community Another sort of example is the 'honour killings' recently reported among Jats in Haryana (Dogra 2008 66-67), where young couples marrying out of community have been killed by their own relatives for defying caste norms Such cases are not confined to a particular community or state or even period in India

The silence or complicity of the entire caste community and village community as well in condoning the violence and protecting the perpetrators speaks of the power and hold of community norms, even though there is no single autocratic leader to enforce them It illustrates the powerlessness of individual action against community action

In this atmosphere, the differences and debates among the Parsis furnish a useful counterpoint and highlight the democratic possibilities in the functioning of ethnic communities, however noisy and acrimonious their differences may seem Parsis themselves are often embarrassed by their publicly aired quarrels [1] In part, their own specific issues of survival and identity are so overwhelming that few from within are able to situate themselves in structural rather than ethno-historical terms The scholarship on the community too tends to reinforce their exotic and unique profile Even though the material I present in this article, namely, the internal debates, are well known to Parsis and those who follow their affairs, the interpretations do not usually take a sociological turn Furthermore, the involvement of the Zoroastrian diaspora in these debates is a new and still unfolding one, and provides fresh insights in an old situation

Communities within the Zoroastrian Fold

The Indian Parsis are followers of Zoroastrianism, an ancient religion with its origins in Persia, that is, current day Iran According to Parsi historical sources, following the invasion of Sassanian Persia by Arabs in the 8th century AD, a group of Zoroastrians fled to the Gujarat coast, where the ruler gave them asylum [2] Since then, they have lived in India, keeping a separate identity, despite adapting to many local customs and practices and being like 'sugar in the milk' as the story goes [3] They were largely settled in the villages and towns of Gujarat From the 17th century onwards, with the development of Bombay (now Mumbai) by the British as a city of trade, the Parsi profile changed They were invited to settle in Bombay as ship builders, traders and merchants, and mediators between the East India Company and the hinterland, they became an enterprising and prosperous community They also took to western lifestyle in a big way (Kulke 1978 239-50) In the post-independence period, though popular discourse valorises the contribution of Parsis to national life, more scholarly analysis (see Luhrmann 1996) see the loss of colonial patronage result in a decline of the community, with a crisis of confidence, of self-criticism, and perpetual agonising

Parsis have a thriving diaspora In the late 18th and 19th centuries, they had become heavily involved in India's overseas trade in different

parts of the British Empire and migrated to Yemen (especially Aden), East Africa, and Hong Kong. A powerful group of Parsis also settled down in Karachi Later, after independence, like other South Asian communities, they migrated to Britain, Canada, Hong Kong, USA, Australia, and New Zealand (Hinnells 2005, Lal 2006 100)

The followers of Zoroastrianism are a tiny group, and yet do not constitute a single community unit [4] Parsis of India and Zoroastrians of Iran are the two major groups, the latter numbering around a sixth of the former [5] Arguably, among the former, the 'Bombay Parsis' constitute a distinct segment The Iranian Zoroastrians who migrated to Mumbai in the 19th century form a small and distinct group in Mumbai, even though Parsis recognise them officially as part of the Parsi Zoroastrian community In recent decades, Zoroastrians based in the West, particularly North America, of both Parsi and Iranian origin, have coalesced around certain issues to form a third group, increasingly influential This diaspora has unleashed a new kind of dynamics, altering the traditional 'big brother' role that Parsis had played in their long history of interaction with Iranian Zoroastrians [6]

There has been some discussion among scholars on whether Parsis themselves constitute a Zoroastrian diaspora in India John R Hinnells (2005), the pioneering scholar on the Zoroastrian diaspora, questions the contention of William Safran and Robin Cohen that though they have been devoted to the religion, followed the rituals, and kept contact with Iranian Zoroastrians through the centuries, Parsis owed no allegiance to a Persian sovereign or to Persian territory and have had no notions of returning to the homeland He argues that Parsis are already a diaspora in India (*ibid* 23-25) In fact, this very characteristic has, according to him, led to the Parsi diaspora in the West keeping less close links with the old country (India), for many of them, the 'real' old country is Persia, a country with which they cannot currently establish relations They are, therefore, able to identify readily with the local population, thus facing less problems of identity in their new locations

In contrast, diasporic Iranian Zoroastrians are different, because of their distinct sense of links to the 'old country' (Hinnells 1994 78) They do, therefore, leave a distinct stamp on the Zoroastrian diaspora in contrast to other South Asian diaspora It has been observed that there have been disagreements over food and language, and the two groups – the Parsi and the Iranian Zoroastrians in the diaspora – have not had much social contact in the past,[7] and there are differences in religious practices, too Parsis accept the authority of the priests in religious matters and see the priest as a man of spiritual power – a Hindu influence Living in the Muslim environment, the Iranians see all

authority as lying in the words of the Prophet as revealed in the sacred scriptures, they often speak negatively about the role of the priesthood (*ibid* 66) This seems to have left its imprint on the overall Zoroastrian diasporic religious practice, which tends to have more textual, rational, theological, and transcendental elements than Indian Zoroastrianism (Lal 2006 101)

Within this scenario of a transnational community with three major constituents – in India, Iran, and the diaspora – the Bombay Parsis constitute an influential segment, firstly by their sheer numbers They constitute nearly 70 per cent of the Indian Parsi population As a professionally successful group administering substantial community wealth and charities, they also carry considerable clout [8] According to a popular view point, the Bombay Zoroastrian institutions, along with those in Gujarat, are the authentic representatives of the community, others disagree In the rest of India, the weight of Bombay Parsis is grudgingly recognised At the same time, the Parsi social and religious practices have considerable autonomy as we shall see shortly [9]

Ethnic versus Religious Identity

No matter where they are, the Parsis are a minority, says writer Bapsi Sidhwa (Wadia 2006) The miniscule size of the community is one factor in the history of their largely peaceful inter-community relations But the obverse is the high internal ferment and intense preoccupation with ethnic identity The Parsis define themselves today by two parameters Zoroastrian religion and Parsi ethnicity, defined as descent from the Zoroastrians who migrated to India from Persia in the 8th century AD This double requirement has been made explicit in the wake of controversies that have been erupting periodically for over a century over the matter of community boundary

The Parsis are governed by separate family laws [10] The salience of the community in the life of the individual is high, and the welfare provisions by community organisations to benefit ordinary Parsis, in terms of housing, medical care, education, etc , are good (see Desai 1951, 1977 129-49) There is a plethora of formal organisations and active fora for debate and discussion like newspapers,[11] newsletters, magazines like *Jam-e-Jamshed*, *Mumbai Samachar*, *Parsiana*, and many periodicals in the diaspora like *Fezana* (of the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America [FEZANA]) and *Hamazor* (of the World Zoroastrian Organisation [WZO] Public meetings and litigation are also frequent In recent years, websites like <*parsiworld com*>and chat groups and blogs on Internet have become important fora for airing differences

Community and religious organisations are functionally differentiated, authority is dispersed, and local units within each category are autonomous This blunts the likelihood of an overarching diktat enforceable on all members [12] The *agiarys* (fire temples) are run by individual trusts and have their own rules The *athornans* (priestly families) and *mobeds* (practicing priests) are required to act as per their own conscience The *athornan mandals* (organisations of priests) are only supposed to give guidelines Mumbai- and Gujarat-based High Priests have a special stature, but their authority and prestige are social, not legal The *Anjumans* (community associations) are territorially based and are affiliated to a federation Then there are the Parsi Panchayats to regulate community charities and arbitrate on community matters (Kulke 1978 61-66, 69-73)

Ethnicity, Biological Descent and Notions of Purity

Recent debates within the community have been on two major issues (i) conversion and (ii) the status of the spouse and offspring of marriages of Parsis to non-Parsis In India, intermarriage is the more immediate issue, whereas conversion is the more prominent issue in the diaspora But the rationale for both taboos is deeply intertwined and, in fact, intermarriage provides an important context for conversion In this sense, the underpinnings of the debate span both issues and engage both Indian Parsis and the Zoroastrian diaspora Other interrelated issues are the dwindling population and the genetic effects of inbreeding Then there is the controversy over the special mode of disposal of the dead in the Towers of Silence

The one key theme around which all these issues coalesce is ethnic identity While conventionally ethnicity includes a range of parameters, including religion, in the Parsi discourse, it has come to connote biological descent in contradistinction to religious affiliation The dual requirement of Zoroastrian religion and Parsi descent in effect render the boundaries of the Parsi community impermeable to outsiders that is, those who aspire to religious conversion, spouses of intermarried Parsis, children of Parsi women married to non-Parsis, and non-Parsi children adopted by Parsis Delivering judgement in the famous Parsi Panchayat case, in 1908, Justice Beaman perceptively suggested that, in India, the Parsis function like a caste This may be due to the Indian environment, but it may also be part of the common Indo-Iranian inheritance (see Crishna 2000, Dange 2002, Jamkhedkar 2002)

In addition to the distinction between Parsis and non-Parsis, there is also an internal hierarchy defined by birth Priestly families are

distinguished from lay Parsis and among the latter, those of mixed descent, that is, with a non-Parsi parent are considered to be inferior Not surprisingly, the notion of purity of blood is also reflected in a preoccupation with ritual purity (see Mallik 1980 91-103, Kotwal and Mistree 2002 338) The ritually consecrated fire in an *agiary* is supposed to be at such a high level of purity that only the priest is pure enough to go near it As for non-Parsis, they cannot even enter an *agiary* A Parsi corpse is defiled if touched by non-Parsis, hence they cannot come into *doongerwadi* (the Tower of Silence) for the last rites By the same logic, the bodies of suicide cases and post-mortem cases are considered to be contaminated and are consigned in a separate *chotra* (platform) in the *doongerwadi* The traditional taboos regarding menstruation also used to be very elaborate

J K Banthia (2003), has noted that during 1858-1888, smallpox incidence was high among the Parsis compared to others because of the low vaccination rate, as foreign substances injected into the blood were believed to contaminate the purity of Parsi blood The fear of what is seen as 'dilution' or 'contamination' could be one reason for disallowing conversion But, as we shall see, the fear of outsiders claiming a share of the community pie is another reason The promise given to the King Jadi Rana that 'we will live in peace as brothers and not as brothers in law' is also cited in current day debates

The Issue of Conversion

The Parsi Panchayat case

The famous Petit versus Jeejeebhoy case of a century ago, also known as the Parsi Panchayat case, legally established the current official position that conversion is not open to non-Parsis (Bombay Law Reporter 1908) Furthermore, the judgements by the two judges, Justice Beaman and Justice Davar, upheld, by implication, the then prevalent norm that children of out-married Parsi men could be admitted into the fold but not children of out-married Parsi women The case concerned R D Tata, father of J R D Tata, who, in 1903, married a French woman after getting her *navjote* ceremony performed, claiming that she was now a Parsi It became a highly controversial case The detailed proceedings give us an idea of what was at stake Justice Beaman argued that whether Zoroastrianism doctrinally permitted conversion was not the issue The evidence was that the Parsis in India had not accepted converts (*ibid* 150, 176) A tight ethnic boundary had been superimposed over the religious one Justice Davar reasoned that the 1884 trust deeds, which

established community funds investing 53 lakh rupees for the well-being of its paupers and cripples, was intended by its founders to benefit only ethnic Parsis (*ibid* 112, 125) The fear was that the wealthy community's identity would be swallowed up in the larger Hindu onslaught if the doors were opened for conversion, as Beaman says in so many words He reflected the prevailing sentiment when he regretted that a refined and cultured lady like Mrs Tata, in every respect fit to be a credit and an ornament to the community (*ibid* 165-66), could not be admitted since it would then set precedents for rude, low-caste intruders

Current liberal opinion questions the 'no conversion' stand But conversion *per se* is not as much a preoccupation or a campaign issue among the Parsis in India as the acceptance of children of intermarried couples,[13] even though there has been at least one controversial conversion in recent years, and conversions in the diaspora do become occasions for discussion in India

Conversion in the Diaspora

In the North American diaspora, on the other hand, conversion is a hot issue It never fails to come up at international Zoroastrian meets This is an area where the diasporic Parsis and Iranian Zoroastrians appear to be gradually converging Rashna Writer (1994 199-206), who has done comparative research on the Parsi and Iranian Zoroastrians, points out that, over the centuries, the two, despite common religion, had become socially and culturally distinct The differences are more obvious in the diaspora, especially among those living in USA and Canada Iranians claim to follow the faith in its pure form, whereas Indian Parsis are seen as more westernised due to British influence At the same time, they feel the Parsis in India have become too ritualistic due to Hindu influence

The Zarathushti priests of Iran have been open to the idea of non-Zoroastrians being accepted within the fold after performing the *navjote*, whenever the socio-political conditions allowed it, while the Dasturs in India oppose it (Bekhradnia 2002 2) There is some evidence in the *rivayets* or the written responses of Zoroastrian *mobeds* of Iran to questions from Zoroastrian priests in India on issues of doctrine and religious practice, that the former have supported the initiation of servants who worked in Zoroastrian houses into the religion (McIntyre 2007 32)

The Iranian Zoroastrian diaspora is, on the whole, pro conversion especially for Shia Muslims from Iran who may want to go back to their ancestral religion,[14] and this has somewhat influenced the Parsi diaspora, backed by renowned diasporic scholars such as Kaikhosrov Irani Owing

to the political sensitivities in Iran, the diaspora is careful not to proselytise, but only accept voluntary converts Their approach is to go back to Zarathustra's own preaching which enjoin choosing one's religion according to individual conscience They see Bombay Parsis as being anti-conversion, which is an over-simplification of the actual situation, since there are multiple views on the subject They argue that Parsis are actually a sect within Zoroastrianism, practising a syncretic religion that includes elements from Hinduism, such as patronising *gurus* and practising mystic rituals

The Internet has made it possible for contending views to confront each other directly In one such discussion group,[15] Shervin 2 says 'My word to orthodox Parsis is keep your religion as you want in Gujarat, but don't interfere with our struggle for survival in Iran ' Bahram adds, 'To believe that Zarathustra came to guide only about one hundred thousand Parsis and Iranians is neglecting his great message and bring him down to the surface of racial or geographical conflicts ' Responding to Shervin 2, CK argues that, in any case, this taboo 'clearly does not apply to the Zarathusti brethren of Iran as change was forced on them physically not spiritually I for one consider them as fellow Zarathustis still, and they need nobody's permission whatsoever since they never left ' 'The Shadow', evidently a Parsi, is worried that if conversion was freely allowed, many people would convert and 'the whole essence of the religion for which we live will be diluted' 'Dilution of ethnicity' is a frequent usage, it also recurs in the 'concerned Bawaji's' letter Why should a religion be diluted rather than strengthened if more people follow it? Obviously, the subtext here is that ethnicity defined as common biological descent will be 'diluted'

The Parsi diaspora in North America, especially the younger members are somewhat more inclined towards giving primacy to religion rather than ethnicity, and tend to support both conversion and interfaith marriages For example, the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York includes children of interfaith marriages as members, and the weekly prayers are attended also by those not born Zoroastrians (Guzder 2007) In the wake of the controversial conversion of Joseph Peterson, the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario held a symposium in May 1983 on conversion, and the consensus was that 'the currently prevailing practice of not accepting non-Zoroastrians into the faith is a social and not a religious barrier', and that 'to us, and to our children born and growing in North America, being Parsee will be less meaningful than being Zoroastrians' Deena Guzder's article (*ibid*) on the dilemmas faced by Zoroastrian youth was reproduced on the Internet and the responses from both Parsi and Irani Zoroastrian youth (identifiable by the names) were

overwhelmingly for an inclusive interpretation of community boundaries Likewise, responses to Manoj Nair's report (2007 1) on the forthcoming new *agiary* open to out-married Parsi women and their children were predominantly applauding As a small community with anxieties about identity, the diasporic Farsis keep close contact with the Indian Parsis in ways more dense and tight than the usual diaspora-home linkages The younger Indian Parsis' views on religion and ethnicity reveal the diasporic influence

One frequent suggestion in the conversion debate is that the new converts should form their own *agiarys* These cannot compete with the old established *atash behrams* and *agiarys* in Gujarat and Mumbai, consecrated through thousands of hours of prayers,[16] according to Khojaste Mistree, a Zoroastrian scholar from Mumbai [17] By pushing the growing phenomenon to the status of a marginal cult with separate organisations, the effort is to keep them out of mainstream space Significantly, the dissenters have not yet opted for this on a large scale, because of the high ritual requirements of establishing the sacred fire Recently, the Mumbai based Association for Revival of Zoroastrianism (ARZ) announced plans for an *agiary* in Mumbai's Malad-Goregaon stretch of the Western Express Highway It will be open to spouses and children of intermarried Parsis The process started in 2005 with the setting up of a prayer hall But, this, according to Berjis Desai, who is quoted in the report, is different from an *agiary*, whose consecration is a long and elaborate process The trustees cautiously clarify that this is not a signal that they are into conversions They only commit that they 'will make an attempt to get as close as we can to the setting up of a full-fledged *agiary*' (Nair 2007. 1)

Controversial Conversions

Three controversial conversions in the last few decades reveal the schisms between the Indian Parsis and the Zoroastrian Diaspora, and the divisions within the former as well In 1983, Joseph Peterson, a white American, who had devoted years studying Zoroastrianism, wished to convert (Cooper 1983 1-5) The diasporic Parsi and Iranian Zoroastrian priests converted him ceremonially, to cautious endorsement by the diaspora, emphasising that this was a voluntary conversion, and that Peterson was a Christian, not a Muslim (to prevent any fallout in Iran) The Council of Mobeds of Tehran, which was consulted on the issue by an Iranian *mobed* from USA, gave an official written opinion that they should accept persons who wished to voluntarily embrace Zoroastrianism (McIntyre 2007 32) But it was vociferously opposed by the majority of

Bombay Parsis the Panchayat, the priests, and public opinion (*Parsiana* 1983b 49-51) The priest who performed the *navjote*, Kersi Antia of the Zoroastrian Association of Chicago responded that this conversion was a reflection of the survival attempt by many Zoroastrians across the world for whom the new challenges coming up could not be met by sticking to old customs and practices

In 1994, an elderly Neville Wadia of the famous Bombay Dyeing family converted to Zoroastrianism through the *navjote* ceremony performed by the High Priests in Mumbai (*Parsiana* 1994 31-34) Son of Ness Wadia, who had converted to Christianity and married a Christian woman, Neville had been born and raised as a Christian There was a public furore that the priests had favoured him due to the clout of the wealthy industrialist family But, according to the logic of Parsi ethnicity, his father had been born a Zoroastrian, and so his indubitable Parsi ancestry made Neville's conversion acceptable to the very orthodoxy which had so categorically rejected Peterson's conversion [18]

In the late 1980s and 1990s, Dr Ali Jafarey, an Iranian Shia Muslim by birth, living in USA, claimed to have converted and gone back to his Zoroastrian roots (Writer 1994 214-15) A popular leader of the USA-based Zoroastrian Assembly, he was well versed in the scriptures and claimed that he was born in the Yezd province of Iran, thus making him an ethnic Zoroastrian. His popularity in the diaspora frightened conservative opinion in Mumbai and his detractors claimed that he was actually born in Pakistan, not Yezd His ethnicity was brought into question, for, otherwise, by the Parsi logic, his ancestry would surely qualify him for conversion, even as Neville Wadia's had![19] Yet, in the tradition of debate and dialogue, a special event was organised by FEZANA (though outside the schedule of main events due to heavy opposition) at the WZO Congress in 2000 with the two speakers Jaffrey and Ervard K N Dastoor representing opposite viewpoints on freedom of choice in matters of religion [20]

What we can infer from these examples is that the Iranian Zoroastrian diaspora favours conversions into the religion on the basis of voluntary choice a kind of fundamentalism that returns to the intent and teachings of the founder The traditionalist stream of Parsis – both in India and in the diaspora – opposes conversions if the Parsi ethnic origins are not proved

The Issue of Intermarriage

In the Zoroastrian Diaspora, the issue of intermarriage is not in the forefront, though among the Parsis in India, it is Among the Iranian

Zorastrians, one Zorastrian parent, mother or father, is enough to ensure acceptance into the religion (Bekhradina 2002 2, Writer 1994 109-11) The Iranian Zoroastrians, especially in the diaspora, are more open than many Parsis to the idea of accepting the non-Zoroastrian spouse But the practice on the ground is quite the opposite of these normative positions In Iran, the concept of dating is weak and youth intermingle among themselves only with the intent of marriage In India, more social freedom means more opportunities to interact with non-Zoroastrians Given the small size and high educational level of Parsis, marriage outside the community is quite frequent [21] However, children of interfaith marriages are accepted as Zoroastrians only if the father is a Parsi This is a clear discrimination against Parsi women and their children This situation got legal sanction in 1908 via the Parsi Panchayat case, though it has been argued (Khan 1995) that this discriminatory practice has been gradually infiltrated into the community by vested interests through the misuse of a highly debatable *'obiter dictum'*, that is, a juristic side-comment during the case, and not a judgement There is some indication that the traditional practice was to accept children of out-married Parsi males, or at least turn a blind eye to their initiation, even though periodically strictures were passed against it [22]

In March 2003, a statement was issued by six of the Zoroastrian High Priests, expressing concern at the acceptance of children of interfaith marriages into the religion They passed a resolution forbidding priests from performing *navjote* of such children, even if the father was a Parsi [23] In one stroke, the privilege that Parsi men had enjoyed *de facto* for many centuries and *de jure* since 1908 was taken away Men and women were put on par, though gender justice was not the motivation The High Priests were only pushing the concept of ethnic purity to its logical conclusion, an issue that had surfaced periodically in the past The ensuing uproar was more acrimonious than earlier debates [24] The jurisdiction of the High Priests in issuing such a diktat was vehemently questioned, and the precedents of law and custom were quoted even by the most conservative elements, to argue that children of Parsi males had always been accepted The case for children of Parsi women was not strongly argued for except by the Association of Intermarried Zoroastrians (AIMZ)[25] backed by some trenchant feminist critiquing (see Shahani 2003) Ultimately, in the face of concerted pressure, three of the High Priests withdrew the resolution, to the relief of many and to much editorial applause[26] and the status quo was restored, that is, the discrimination against Parsi women was left as it was

Saklat versus Bella

Given the model of the Sassanian patrilineal system superimposed by caste-derived patriarchy, women were under far greater surveillance and control of sexual behaviour than men were, and only occasionally married out of the community One of the early cases of this kind happened in 1915 (The Bombay Law Reporter 1925) Bella was the daughter of a Parsi mother and Goan Christian father, and was adopted by a Rangoon-based Parsi A suit (Saklat versus Bella) was filed that Bella, as a non-Parsi had violated the sanctity of the *agiary* by visiting it Though the suit and the subsequent appeal were dismissed, the plaintiffs appealed to the Privy Council, which upheld the appeal The judgement says that, though the trustees can treat her as a trespasser, it does not follow that they are bound to so treat her (*ibid* 169-70), meaning that the intent of the trust deed and its terms may permit her, as may the trustees at their discretion So here is the opening for dialogue that exists in the community, its saving grace, notwithstanding the fact that the judgement upheld the prevailing patriarchal notion that the essence of being a Zoroastrian is carried in the male seed (*bonuk*) [27]

The Case of Roxan Shah

The discrimination against her children has also been extended in some sense to the outmarried woman herself, who becomes an entity fraught with ambivalence It is as though her 'Parsiness' has undergone a transformation, even if she continues to be a practicing Zoroastrian [28] Roxan Shah, a Parsi Zoroastrian by birth, married a Hindu under the Special Marriages Act, 1955 When she passed away in 1990, her parents wanted to consign her body in the *doongerwadi* in Bombay, as she was a practicing Zoroastrian The Bombay Parsi Panchayat (which owns and runs the *doongerwadi*) refused to accept her body, since she had married out The event galvanised both pro-changers and no-changers and there were a number of meetings and letters One of the High Priests provocatively called such intermarried women as 'adulterers' (Mama 1990 53) When the Parsi Panchayat was presented with the legal position, they changed track and permitted intermarried Parsi women the right to use the *doongerwadi*, but only the *chotra* reserved for suicide cases Furthermore, the arrangements had to be made by the deceased woman's relatives, not by the *doongerwadi* This was short of recognising women's full and equal rights to community membership, and in any case was rejected by the High Priests (Kotwal 1990 27-29)

Zoroastrian Patrilineality

The ambivalence of a woman's group-placement is fundamental to patrilineal systems In the Parsi rules of intermarriage, one sees the fear of dilution of ethnicity enmeshed in patrilineal ideology As a community which took to 'modernity' early and in a big way, Parsi women's education, personal mobility and freedom, have been relatively high (see McIntyre 1998) Yet the patrilineal ideology of the ancient world continues to colour its religious thought and community practice

The scholarship on women in Zoroastrianism contracts pre-Zorastrian Iranian patriarchy to Zoroastrianism which, though set in the same patrilineal background, represents a progressive move giving women equal rights to men in the matter of worship, and a fairly good secular status (Gould 1995-96, McIntyre 1998) It would seem that later texts like *Vendidad* elaborated the rules of purity more rigidly which led to a negative evaluation of women Even later in the Sassanian and Islamic periods, patriliny got consolidated and became more rigid

Parsi patrilineality has, for centuries, allowed latitude to males in sexual behaviour It has distorted the reality of biological reproduction and genetic inheritance by privileging the male line This has also been a convenient way to increase the numbers while maintaining the fig leaf of ethnic purity In recent years, some intermarried women have tried to circumvent the rule by getting *navjote* done for their children by 'willing' priests This is possible since individual conscience is the ultimate authority for Zoroastrians However, this has to be done surreptitiously, and it is not the same as formal recognition The child cannot visit an *agiary* where she will be recognised

The Parsi rule is similar to patrilineality within caste society which formally enjoins endogamy, but accepts hypergamy whereby a male from an upper caste is permitted to marry a woman from a lower caste but not the other way around the well-known dichotomy between *anuloma* and *pratiloma* norms Caste structure is preoccupied with boundary maintenance through close supervision of and control over marriage, especially of women who act as gateways to the system

In a patrilineal society, the identity of the offspring for group-placement is connected to the father Leela Dube (2001) has vividly shown that proverbs and folklore throughout patrilineal India, including among the dalit and tribal communities, use the metaphor of 'Seed and Earth' to fix the identity of the child in the father's line, and to keep the devolution of property within it Just like the plant carries the identity of the seed, despite being nurtured by the soil, so too the child carries the

identity of the father and women are neatly divested of material rights, despite their crucial role in bearing and rearing children

The Dialectic of Transnational and Local

The debate and dissent, of which I have given the merest glimpse, has not yet found resolution It underscores the absence of a homogenous, single community of Parsi Zoroastrians (despite religious and ethnic unity) and, thus, casts doubts on the very notion of any permanent or enduring community. Divisions on the basis of geographical location are cross-cut by differences in interpretations of religion and ethnicity There is the obvious division between the Indian Parsis and Iranian Zoroastrians, but in the context of the diaspora, large sections of the two come together on certain issues Among the Indian Parsis, the geographical divide between Bombay and the 'Rest of India' has something to do with numbers and community resources It was probably in this sense that a Parsi woman residing in Mahim (a suburb in Mumbai), whom I talked to, made a comment about 'South Bombay Parsis' Again there are cross-cutting differences on ideology within all these groups

The Parsi diaspora is, on the whole, more pro-change than the Bombay Parsis This has in part to do with the general condition of diaspora-ness, which, as Vertovec (1999 10-11) points out, stimulates self-questioning of routine, habitual religious practice, triggering a shift from religiousness to religious mindedness Yet, the liberals in Mumbai, and in India generally, get considerable support from the diaspora position The many disputes, court cases, public meetings, and resolutions have in fact grown to define the Parsi Zoroastrian community, regardless of actual outcomes Significantly, neither side is ready to concede the mainstream space and occupy a separate (and marginal) domain The growing influence of the latter on the conversion issue can be seen in the way younger Parsis, both in India and in the diaspora are increasingly moving towards religion rather than ethnicity as a base for identity It points to the reality of the transnational community's sphere of influence

At the same time, there has been no dent in the local community's boundary making as far as disbursement of charities, welfare, and benefits based on community membership go Given the mixed class composition of the community in Mumbai, which is home to a large chunk of the community, and the dependency of families on housing, for instance, which is a scarce commodity in this city, and on medical facilities, scholarships and the like, it is not surprising that a strong and

vocal section of the local community fiercely guards 'the pie' from intruders

On a more general note, the transnational community has entered the fray as a valid and powerful player, but has not displaced locality As Blanc *et al* (1995 685) argue, while global trends are often re-inscribed in local contexts, localities in turn are generating differentiated responses, their own forms of organisation and their specific brands of racism In sociological approaches to community, the classic definition that limited it to social interaction based on locality was powerfully challenged by approaches such as Cohen's and Anderson's that stressed on meaning and identity The criticism of this has been that it has led to a loss of the social dimension of community as a lived practice, and got excessively preoccupied with the cultural There is a trend now to reinsert the social into community and recover the sense of place (Delanty 2003 3)

The tradition of local autonomy and individual conscience among Parsis make it difficult to enforce any decision on all members, and democratic discussion is virtually the only way forward, uncertain though its outcome may be The poignant situation of the diminishing population adds urgency to the battle of the dissenters to keep the boundaries of the community flexible and open Whether they will prevail in time before it is too late remains an open question

Notes

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1 For example, Tata Steel Managing Director Jamshed Irani, also the President of Jamshedpur Parsi Association, said in his address to the Federation of Parsi-Zoroastrian Anjumans of India in Jamshedpur (2-3 December 2000) that he was struck by the diversity of views in such a small community diversity is good, but not to the extent of (our) destroying each other, he said (Mama 2001 39) His perception is a popular one

2 The earliest record of the Parsi migration and settlement in India was compiled in 1600 by the Zoroastrian priest Bahman Kaikobad Sanjana in the *Kisseh-I-Sanjan*, a narrative poem which encapsulates the oral traditions of the community (Writer 1994 21)

3 The well-known, oft repeated story is that when the Parsis arrived and requested asylum from the King, he brought in a bowl brimming with milk to indicate that there was no space for them The leader of the Parsis added a spoonful of sugar and dissolved it in the milk to indicate that they would merge with the local population and add sweetness by their presence Interestingly, there is another version of the story, popular among Parsis (personal communication from Zarin Sethna, source Ervad (Dr) Ramiyar P Karanjia, Principal, Athornan Boarding Madressa, Dadar) Here the sugar is replaced by a gold ring The ring does not change the composition of the milk, nor itself change, but adds value The two versions could be possibly read as others' perceptions and Parsis' own perceptions respectively of their place in Indian society – merging totally, or remaining separate but adding value

4 The global population of Zoroastrians is estimated to be about 190,000 at most, and perhaps as few as 124,000, according to a survey in 2004 by *FEZANA Journal*, published quarterly by the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America Of this total, Parsis number 120,000 to 125,000 According to the Census of India 2001, the number of Zoroastrians in India is 69,601 In Iran, in 1998, Zoarastrians were one in a thousand or about 17,000 (www adherents com/Na/Na_674 html) Seventeen thousand Zoroastrians live in the United States, 6,000, in Canada, 5,000, in England, 2,700, in Australia, and 2,200, in the Persian Gulf nations, according to the *FEZANA Journal* survey

5 I have not researched on further subdivisions among the Iranian Zoroastrians

6 The Parsis kept in touch with the Iranian Zoroastrians intermittently through the centuries The period spanning the 15th to 18th centuries saw the exchange of *rivayets* between the two communities The *rivayets* are a compilation of instructions provided by Zoroastrian priests of Iran to inquiries raised by the Parsi priests of India They also contain acknowledgement of the living conditions of the groups in their respective countries The Parsi emissaries brought back twenty-six *rivayets* between 1478 and 1773 (Boyce 1979 173,178) For 300 years, this question-answer mode went on, the Iranians being clearly the superior ecclesiastical authority But, in later years, the Iranian Zoroastrians were reduced in numbers and wealth, and the equation became inverse, with Parsis taking the lead in supporting them in a number of ways (Mistree 2002 419) In the 19th century, after the Parsi emigration to Bombay, the contact became more intensive In 1854, Manekji Limji Hataria, on behalf of the Anjuman Akaber Saheban (Society for the Amelioration of the Conditions of Iranian Zoroastrians), went to Iran to inquire about their well-being London Parsis were active in campaigning for them to get a seat in the Iranian Majlis Parsis also made efforts to repair the Atash Behram in Iran A few years ago, Parsi trusts, etc modified their rules to include Iranian Zoroastrians (Mehr 2002 279, 281, 286)

7 The fact that the British, American, and Canadian Zoroastrian youth, Iranian and Parsi, find it virtually impossible to come together to socialise but choose instead to remain within their groups reflects 'genuine lack of understanding of the other's historical and cultural experiences and the lack of will to come together as a people' (Writer 1994 67)

8 The city of Bombay was developed as a port and trading nucleus by the East India Company, which invited trading and mercantile communities, like the Bohras, Bhatias, and Parsis from Gujarat to settle From the 17th century onwards, the Parsis increasingly gave up farming to migrate to Bombay With their close association with the British, quite early the community embraced western values women dropped *purdah*, social mixing between sexes was accepted, and women's education was at a relatively high level They came to be known as a forward and progressive community Simultaneously, the Bombay Parsis also claimed religious dominance (Kulke 1978 92, 104-07) Mumbai houses more temples, libraries, housing colonies,

and educational and medical resources for Parsis than any other city (Hinnells 2005 33) The older fire temples are located in Mumbai and Gujarat and, due to long years of continuous worship, their ritual power is believed to be high

9 The Delhi Parsi Anjuman, for instance is considered to be much more progressive and reformist than it Mumbai counterpart

10 The Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act, 1936 (amended up to Act 5 of 1988) and the Indian Succession Act, 1925, which has a separate section on the Parsis

11 The early Gujarati and English press in Bombay were dominated by the Parsis (Varma 2008)

12 Several people I spoke to in the wake of the 2003 ruling by the High Priests said that a *fatwa* was just impossible So was social boycott The community is too progressive with many influential liberals for such action

13 That, in the context of two traditionally non-proselytising religions like Hinduism and Zoroastrianism, conversion into Zoroastrianism should be a low-profile issue in India is not surprising Intermarriage, being such a volatile issue, is also of a piece with Indian society, its endogamous caste divisions, its close supervision of and control over marriage, and its preoccupation with the purity of women as gateways to the caste system

14 Writer (1994 123) notes that the Iranian Zoroastrians have begun to admit foreign wives and children of mixed unions (even where the father is a non-Zoroastrian) New converts to Islam have also been re-admitted into the fold, as well as those Zoroastrians who embraced Bahai'ism and wished later to revert to the old faith

15 The home page of Shahriar Shahriari of Vancouver, Canada, set up in January 1997, features a discussion group (now no longer active) that ferociously debated the idea of conversion between January 1999 and February 2000 I accessed the material, which was part of his archive, on Internet in March 2003

16 Zoroastrian places of worship are graded The holy fire of utmost spiritual power is that of the *Aatash Behram*, which requires sixteen different types of fire to make it, with various types of ceremonies being performed It takes about five years for an *Aatash Behram* to be ready for worshippers Today, there are only eight *Aatash Behrams* four in Mumbai, two in Surat, one in Navsari, and the holiest one, the *Iranshah* at Udwada The *Aatash Adaran* or *Agiary* is ranked next, requiring four different types of fires The *Aatash Dadgah* comes next, families may have it at home, and it may be used for *jashan* ceremonies (Personal communication from Zarin Sethna, based on conversations with practising *mobeds* Ervad Tehmurasp N Ankleshwaria and Ervad Hormazd N Ankleshwaria)

17 Personal interview

18 The correspondence between Neville Wadia and the High Priests on his wishing to convert to Zorastrianism and their acceptance of it is reproduced in *Parsiana* (February 2003 35-36) The Udwada Samast Anjuman passed a resolution in the State of Gujarat on 19 March 1995, declaring the case of Mr Neville Wadia to be an exception

19 Although the aversion is also attributable to a stream of opinion that Iranian Muslims are no longer of 'pure Persian' a century

20 At the WZO Congress in 2000, FEZANA organised a debate between Ali Jafarey and Ervard K N Dastoor The special event was reported in detail on the websites of FEZANA and WZO Initially, the Indian contingent wanted to boycott the event as conferring legitimacy on a questionable individual Eventually they decided not to boycott Pamphlets were distributed about the 'fraudulent claims' of Jaffrey The event was jam-packed The moderator was scrupulously fair in time-allocation Both the speakers – a traditionalist and a fundamentalist – spoke, it is reported, in a serious, sober, scholarly fashion without attempting melodramatics The criticism of

Jaffrey that surfaced in the Internet included points like he wore a crochet skull cap and looked like a Muslim, rather than a Zoroastrian He opened his speech with a chant from the scriptures and it sounded strange and was made in an unnatural tone, said in the wrong voice, etc were some of the comments

21 AIMZ estimates, for example, that the figure increased from 35 per cent in 1997 to 45 per cent in 1998

22 The judgement in the Parsi Panchayat case cites several instances of the so-called conversions actually being initiations of children of Parsi fathers through non-Parsi mothers, for instance, the Mazgaon conversions in 1882 (Part iv) It also shows how, in the 1820s, the whole *Anjuman* of Bombay campaigned against performing *navjote* for children of women of 'alien creeds' (Part ix 23) Daver opines that, in the early part of the last century, children of Parsi fathers by alien mothers, often Doobri (Doobla tribe of South Gujarat?) women employed as domestic servants, were allowed the *navjote* without much fuss, but when the phenomenon grew, there was community opposition At first, the practice was restricted, by making permission necessary, then later it was resolved by the *Anjuman* not to admit such children, and penalties were prescribed

23 The six High Priests were from western India – Mumbai, Navsari, Surat, and Udwada The seventh signatory was Dasturji Nadirshah P Unvalla from Bangalore For the text of the Resolution, see 'Parsee Matters', *Jam-e-Jamshed* (23 March 2003)

24 For a sample of the tone, see *'Parsi tari Arsi'* section of *Mumbai Samachar* (20 April 2003)

25 AIMZ was formed in the aftermath of the Toxan Shah incident to seek justice for Parsee women in interfaith marriages

26 For example, *Jam-e-Jamshed* (4 May 2003 11) and *Mumbai Samachar* (4 May 2003 20)

27 That this has practical consequences is clear from the Bombay Parsi Panchayat's policy that a Parsi male married out should give a written undertaking that, on his demise, the tenancy would devolve on his children and not on his non-Parsi wife, though she could reside there

28 In 1872, a Parsi woman married a Christian, under the Indian Christian marriage act of 1872 She continued to practice Zoroastrianism, and, on her death, her relatives wanted her body to be consigned in the Towers After consultation, her body was consigned to the *chotra* where doubtful cases are assigned In 1948, the conservative groups tried to establish that there was a custom that marriage of a woman to a non-Parsi meant that she left the community automatically Legally, this could not be proved ambivalence of a woman's group-placement is fundamental to patrilineal systems Bombay Prevention of Excommunication Act protects Parsi women who have married out of the community The Special Marriages Act, 1954 gives a Parsi woman the full legal right to keep her own religion

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The Traditional Neighbourhoods in a Walled City: *Pol*s in Ahmedabad

C.N. Ray

This article examines the changes in the traditional neighbourhood groupings, called pols, *in Ahmedabad It shows that the* pols, *which once provided the link between individuals and the city, are on the decline The* pols, *which were once socio-culturally homogeneous, have changed through a gradual shift in their social composition The nature of the change is analysed through three case studies*

[Keywords Ahmedabad, *pol*, *panch* system, traditional neighbourhoods, urban space]

Introduction

Urban neighbourhood has been a subject of discussion in sociology and urban planning for the last few decades The discussion is mainly centred on the process of neighbourhood formation, recent developments in and the decline of traditional urban neighbourhoods, and solutions to the problems of urban development and change Neighbourhood has gained renewed interest and significance due to the rapid growth of population in cities Urban ecological theory, which dominated the sociological studies in the early 1900s, analysed cities through the human ecology lens and saw poor urban neighbourhoods as transitional and functional zones of larger urban metropolises, places where new immigrant groups would pass through for a temporary period of time The relationship between people and their residential environments is apparently far more complicated The relationship between the individual and the environment, with the emphasis on how people perceive and experience their residential environments, is a vital theme for research

In the 19th century, Ferdinand Tonnies, Georg Simmel, and Emile Durkheim all observed that societies change in response to the transition towards an industrial society Traditional ties disappear rapidly in modern societies, particularly in urban contexts The same diagnosis was offered by the sociologists of the Chicago School in the first decades of the 20th century According to Robert E. Park and Ernest Burgess (1925), it is probably the breaking down of local attachments and the weakening of the restraints and inhibitions of the primary group, under the influence of the urban environment, which are largely responsible for the increase of vice and crime in great cities

Indian Neighbourhood

In India, cities of clearly distinct neighbourhoods have preserved not only the morphological features of the cultural influence and historical period of their conception, but also part of the vocabulary that was traditionally attached to them Such cities have a long tradition of vernacular buildings and neighbourhoods, which have evolved as a response to the climates and socioeconomic conditions In all the old cities, there are indigenous residential areas, with compact built form and hierarchy of spaces helped to develop the traditional neighbourhood like '*mohallas*' in most of the north Indian cities, '*paras*' in Kolkata, '*peths*' in Pune, and '*pols*' in Ahmedabad The built form of these neighbourhoods offer more personalised and safe living environment children can play and inhabitants can freely interact with each other (Singh 1981)

According to K B Jain (1978), at a given point in space and time, the form of a city expresses the forces and circumstances which shape it In its physical sense, the form is the ordered arrangement of city elements like sectors forces Form of an Indian city, typically, is a dense mass of built forms made porous by house courts, public spaces and winding narrow streets

Neighbourhood organisations are still playing very important role in bringing back the normalcy and helping to solve some complex problems created due to political and communal forces The metropolitan city of Mumbai experienced one of the worst outbreaks of violence towards the end of 1992 and the beginning of 1993 The animosity between the Hindus and Muslims and the inability of the state to respond effectively were demonstrated on a scale never before witnessed in the city Disturbed by the horrendous devastation, some concerned citizens and members of the police force in the city, decided to quench the fire of hatred and the destruction caused by it Their steps, small but firm, ultimately resulted in *mohalla* committees, a civil society initiative that

involved members of the police and the public, to help heal some of the severe communal wounds (Thakkar 2004)

The *mohalla* committees in Mumbai have evolved their own pattern and have started attracting the attention of the academics and activists As the very name of the *mohalla* committees suggests, these units are located in the neighbourhood, evoking the spontaneous links among the people forged by their living together Care was taken not to turn them into formal organisations Members were concerned citizens of the area who were non-political and non-controversial in their working method and non-communal in their approach Every police station has some beats based on the size of the area within its jurisdiction, and each beat would have a *mohalla* committee headed by the beat officer Members would be the persons from all the communities of the area who would devote some time for such work without any motive and with devotion and courage Professionals like doctors, lawyers and teachers as well as duty conscious citizens and women come forward to contribute their time and energy There would be a facilitator also, chosen by the citizens, who would work with the beat officer, not only to do the routine work like fixing dates and time for the meetings, but also to do the follow-up action on issues raised at the meetings

Ahmedabad City

The Ahmedabad city was founded by Sultan Ahmed Shah in 1411 to serve as the capital of the Sultanate of Gujarat Under the British rule, a military cantonment was established and the city infrastructure was modernised and expanded Although incorporated into the Bombay Presidency during the British rule, Ahmedabad remained the most important city in the Gujarat region The city established itself as the home of a booming textile industry, which earned it the nickname 'the Manchester of the East' Unlike Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, and Kanpur, Ahmedabad was not the creation of the British, but a city which, while remaining true to itself, successfully adapted to the new industrial age carrying over commercial and industrial skills and patterns of traditional social organisation In no other city of India can the continuity of past and present be seen as clearly as in Ahmedabad (Gillion 1968)

Ahmedabad was organised along the guilds of the artisans To some extent, the guilds took care of the welfare of its members *Nagarsheth*, the head of the city, who arbitrated and took policy decisions on most matters, resolved the inter-guild conflicts According to Dwijendra Tripathy and M J Mehta (1978), *nagarshethship* in Ahmedabad was an innovation in urban institution Challenging the popularly held view that

the institution began with Emperor Jehangir conferring this title on a principal merchant, they emphasise that the institution had a more spontaneous beginning and evolved gradually It became hereditary after the Moghul emperor accorded official sanction to it in 1732 However, the rise of more formal institutions and the growth of industrial leadership after the establishment of the British rule, the institution became superfluous and gradually disappeared H Spodek (2002) argues that elites here were just as desirous of following British suggestions in supporting hospitals and educational institutions

Although not unique to Ahmedabad, the interaction of demographic and economic forces has resulted in a highly segmented spatial pattern of growth in terms of income-class and environmental quality *Chawls* and slums are concentrated in the old city and beyond on the eastern side and, with high densities and a lack of basic facilities, these represent the lower end of the spectrum The growth areas to the west of the city are predominantly occupied by the middle and high-income categories The addition of the industrial area to the east of the city in 1986 compounded the problems of infrastructure deficiencies in the eastern periphery (Dutta 2000)

The contradictions of rapid urbanisation first became visible in Ahmedabad with the outbreak of Hindu-Muslim conflicts from the early 1960s, culminating in the eruption of one of the worst post-independence communal riots in 1969 These riots marked the demise of the Mahajan culture as the old city elite among both the Muslims and Hindus were unable to contain the violence Another feature of these riots was the beginning of the partisan role of the state and the emerging nexus between the political leaders and criminals (Yagnik 2002) The 1970s witnessed the Navnirman student's movement, essentially an urban upsurge against those who were repeating excessively the slogans of green and white revolutions

Neighbourhoods in Ahmedabad

Ahmedabad has a strong tradition of neighbourhood groupings, locally called as *pols* *Pols* are residential areas occupied by a set of people from the same religious background, often involved in the same trade Many of these residential areas are gated, and have a labyrinthine street system within This entrance or gate was known by the name of the community living in the enclosed area Over the years, as the close knit pattern of *pol*-living nucleated deep amity, neighbourhoods were formed around common professions

Shibu Raman (2003) has examined the differences in morphology of different areas of the walled city of Ahmedabad, where different ethnic communities live in distinct localities His analysis used space syntax methodology Different localities within the walled city were studied, both as they are embedded in the city and in isolation This was done in order to find the differences in their organisation of spaces and their relation to their immediate neighbourhoods, as well as to find the relation of spaces to other spaces within the walled area The investigation showed many similarities in the local areas of Ahmedabad in terms of their syntactic values and the structuring principles of spaces But a detailed analysis showed some differences in the spatial patterns of Hindu and Muslim communities These differences, when looked in conjunction with the ethnic landscape of the city, revealed some interesting aspects of typical social and cultural patterns of the walled city of Ahmedabad

The most popular sociological writing on *pols* in Ahmedabad is by Harish Doshi (1976) According to Doshi, this particular tradition of neighbourhood living developed in the pre-industrial phase of the city's growth It shows that the *pols* have acted as a link between individuals and the larger city They encouraged the members to take part in activities on a small scale, which they may repeat on a large scale outside the *pol* in the field of sports, and literary and other cultural competitions on the school and college campus *Pols* have also provided recognition to the accomplishments of the members in different spheres of their activities

Doshi observes that the way in which houses are arranged in the *pols* reflects the *pol*'s defence-oriented structure The houses are built with great care, the main roads are faced by the dead walls of these houses which are provided with a small entrance Inside the houses are open courtyards and covered water reservoirs The courtyard is sometimes raised into a terrace and used as a lounge or for storing grains or other domestic goods A specialty of these houses is the existence of an underground cellar with a carefully hidden entrance Some of these cellars have air shafts running through the walls, so that they may be used as retreats by men-in-hiding The price of the houses on the road was cheaper than the interior ones, they were easily available as compared to the latter The main street of a *pol* is divided into smaller streets and each small street is further divided successively to an extent that they are no more than a narrow passage to walk

Vastu Shilpa Foundation (1997) studied the 'Jethabhai ni Pol' at Khadia, which is believed to have established about 280 years ago This Pol exhibits fairly homogeneous character in its residential population

Very little area is left for circulation, which makes for the efficient use of land However, with 80 1 dwelling units per hectare, there is very high density of built mass Any further efforts at densifying the area by means of land use change from residential to commercial or by subdividing joint family houses into smaller nuclear family apartments will pose serious problems with proportionately increased demand on support infrastructure, amenities as well as space provisions

Dyan Belliappa (1992) analysed the ingress of commercial activity into the *pols* in the walled city of Ahmedabad The ingress is seen as the culmination of the two complementary processes taking place simultaneously As the demand for space increased, commercial units began looking for alternative locations for shops and other establishments within and outside the *pols* On the other hand, dissatisfied with their residential accommodation, the residents tended to move out of the *pols* Based on his study of four *pols*, Belliappa observed three patterns (i) replication of activities, (ii) push down the order, and (iii) growth over time These patterns emerged from the concerns about the causes of ingress into the *pols* and as a result, the nature of commercial ingression

A report by Heritage Cell, Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC), and Ahmedabad Community Foundation (ACF) (nd) has pointed out that the *panch* (the executive management body) in many *pols* have ceased to exist or have become dormant The major reason for the decline of the *panch* is division among the residents and lack of effective leadership The old *panch* system had emerged with the collective efforts of the older citizens, who were also the richer ones in the *pol* These residents, because of their contributions, donations, and good deeds for the *pol*, were unanimously selected as the leaders or the *panch* members who worked voluntarily for the welfare of the *pol* and its residents As most of the active old members have migrated out of the walled city and seldom visit their *pol*, there is a serious decline in the management of the activities

The Case Studies

The main objective of this article is to place the neighbourhood and development process in the context of broader metropolitan growth and change in Ahmedabad city A few case studies are used to highlight the changing system of neighbourhoods in old Ahmedabad Primary data were collected through personal interviews and informal discussions with the elders, and by non-participant observation It is expected that a detailed study of the changing pattern of traditional neighbourhood would help to overcome the structural and socio-cultural bottlenecks for revitalisation

in the context of overall change in the internal structure and form of the Ahmedabad city

Case studies of the Vadvali Pol, Navi Pol, and Ambilivali Pol located in the Shahpur area of the walled city were undertaken to find out the present condition and changes in the life and living in traditional neighbourhoods Shahpur, located on the banks of the Sabarmati River, has about 98 *pols* The basic reason for selecting these three *pols* is that Shahpur area is conflict-prone, poor area of the city For a long time, it was dominated by Jains, Patels, and Muslims As in many other municipal wards within the walled city, there has been a striking change in the population profile of Shahpur since the 1990s Earlier, Hindus formed 60 per cent of the population, and a Muslim candidate could not hope to win a municipal election from this area Over the last decade, many Hindu families have moved out of the area, and now Muslims form over half its population Nevertheless, the three *pols* selected for the study are still occupied by same religious groups as it was in the past

Vadvali Pol

As reported by few senior residents of the Vadvali Pol, it is about 250 years old and its name is derived from the banyan tree Initially, this Pol had only Kadva Patels, who came from the nearby districts of north and central Gujarat When industrialisation started in Gujarat, these Patidars gradually moved to suburban areas by selling their houses in the Pol since the late 1960s Families of other communities like Jain, Vanik, Parikh, Brahmin, etc came into the Pol Socially, this Pol is heterogeneous in composition consisting of people belonging to different regions and communities

In addition to the *panch* this Pol was operated and managed by Aadarsh Mitra Mandal This Mandal also took the initiative to start a nursery school for children and Hanuman Vyayam Mandir (a traditional gymnasium, locally called as *akhado*) For administrative purposes, one member from each household (owner only) was the member of *panch* and, in some cases, old tenants were also included in the *panch* In all, six members were elected for different posts like president, treasurer, etc and all of them were responsible to the general body of the *panch* The main objective of the *panch* was to ensure safe and peaceful life for the residents living in the Pol, along with the overall development of the Pol For performing its responsibilities, the *panch* collected monthly donations from each of the members Gradually, the *panchs* were able to have some property in the form of two houses, entrance gate, a well, four shops along the road, a storage house, some vessels/utensils for use

during special occasions like marriage, and a *chabutara* (place for feeding birds)

In general, the daily activities of the *panch* were restricted to dispute resolution, celebration of religious festivals like Holi and Navratri and observation of national days like the Independence Day and Republic Day In addition to these activities, the *panch* organised religious events like Havan in the month of Chaitra and community feasts On 15 August and 26 January, various competitions were organised, and members of the *akhado* participated in march-past and other activities

Residents of the Pol were bound by the rules and regulations decided by the *panch*, and no deviations were allowed Some of these rules – compulsory attendance at wedding or death ceremonies in any family of the Pol, and selling or renting of the property only to a Patidar family – remained unchanged for along The buyer of a house had to pay 10 per cent of buying price to the *panch* and become its member If house is let out on rent, the leaser had to pay Rs 4 per year to the *panch* All such collections went to the Pol fund The *panch* also collected some annual tax from the residents This was used for buying some utility equipment, arranging community dinner, celebration of festivals, etc This Pol never had any security in the main gate, which remained open except during communal violence. Another important rule of the *panch* was *pol* endogamy, that is, no boy or girl could marry within the Pol Young boys and girls were required to treat each other as siblings and no romantic relation was permissible

The situation remained more or less static till the late 1970s, when the Patidar families from this Pol started moving to newly developed areas – like Ranip, Navragpura, Vadaj, and Sola Road –on the western side of the city This was also the time when the city started growing towards the western part and many textile mills started closing down (which continued till the late 1980s) The same trend was then followed by other *savarna* (clean caste) families Many of these families started selling their houses or rented them out to families or for small business

In front of the Pol, there is a settlement, called Nagorivad, which is dominated by the Vaghri community This community, which is low in caste status, was engaged in daily wage activities, and they were later included in the list of Other Backward Communities According to many elders, the communal clashes between the Hindus and Muslims started from this area and spread to other parts of the old city Of the seven *pols*, four are now dominated by the Muslims, and this change has taken place over a period of ten years

In the riot of 1984, people of this Pol and nearby areas were severely affected This riot left a woman widow and a child, fatherless The Pol

was under curfew for two months, which created a lot of problems for the families When the situation improved and the curfew was lifted some families from this Pol moved to safer areas of the city During this period, two families of Vaghri community moved into the Pol This was unsuccessfully objected to by the upper-caste members, and gradually the demographic character of the Pol changed

In 1992, the entire city was disturbed by another bout of communal riots following the demolition of Babri Masjid As this area has become communally more sensitive, normal life was disturbed and families suffered due to curfew and feared for their life Prolonged violence affected business and livelihood of the people This can be considered as the turning point, as many families started leaving this Pol and moving to the western part of the city, which is considered to be a safer place and free from communal violence, as it dominated by the Hindus When people started selling their houses in distress, Vaghris staying in Nagorivad started buying them Hence, gradually, the social character of the Pol started changing, and the old *panch* system that managed the affairs of the Pol ceased to function The new members did not show any interest in reviving the *panch* system

At present, there are forty-six houses and approximately 100 households residing in this Pol. The ownership pattern has changed, as about 50 per cent of the households are owned and the remaining is rented The caste composition has also changed The Vaghris receive benefits from the government under the reservation policy, and most of them are working in central or state government offices There is now no rule restricting the sale or subletting of houses to any particular community

The *panch* is wound up in the Pol and the common property of the *panch* has been sold The water-storage well has been filled with rubble The *chabutara* is still maintained by the old *panch* and the old bank account is still maintained by the old residents The money available in this account is used for purchasing grains for the *chabutara*, which shows that the old *panch* members still have some psychological attachment to the place where they once stayed However, the present residents have not maintained any relation with the previous owners or the *panch*

The present residents have destroyed the storage house and, in that place, they have constructed a small temple Eighteen houses were affected in the 2001 earthquake, and their owners have received compensation as per the government guidelines During the last fifteen years, fourteen houses have been newly constructed, and many old houses have been repaired by the new owners Hence, the physical

condition of the Pol has improved compared to the past, but the social and cultural interactions and community living are missing

The old *mandals* (associations) are no more working, but some collective activities are still going on in the Pol During the field survey, many residents expressed that there is very low level of social interaction among the residents On the other hand, in the absence of effective leadership, internal fighting is increasing The present dwellers get strong community feelings only during the riots and there is no desire on their part to help the others during the normal period

The owner of houses in this Pol usually let out their house to their relatives only The tenants have to pay some large amount to the owner in lieu of the monthly rent Although both parties are known to each other, the tenancy is controlled by a written agreement between two, neither the owners nor the tenants trusts their relatives or community members The residents appeared to be ignorant about the *panch* system of administration and its activities for the development and maintenance of the Pol

Internal disputes and infighting is the biggest problem in the daily life of this Pol Community participation is very difficult for the residents, as they have high level of internal disputes Encroachment of open space is also a major problem Many residents are keeping their household stuff in the community open space and impeding the movement of people Many a time this becomes the main reason for fight among the residents It also creates an unhealthy environment

Dineshbhai Bhavsar was born in 1952, after his parents moved into this Pol in 1950 as tenants He stayed along with his brother till 1993 and paid a monthly rent of Rs 25 In 1993, he moved out of this Pol to Vasna area and then to Satellite area, which is on the west bank of Sabarmati The house in which Dineshbhai was staying was divided into six units and let out to tenants The owner, a Brahmin living in Dariapur area of the old city, visited the Pol every month for collecting rent In 1992, he sold the house to tenants at the rate of Rs 15,000 for the ground floor, Rs 10,000 for the first floor, and Rs 5,000 for the top floor According to Dineshbhai, the only reason for his leaving the Pol was the infiltration of Vaghris, who have a different lifestyle, which was not liked by the old residents However, Dineshbhai is still in touch with his old neighbours and they also invite him for family celebrations like marriage

Lilavatiben, aged 71, staying in this Pol as a tenant for the last twenty years, is not at all happy with the living environment of the Pol due to regular infighting among families over petty matters She lives here with her unmarried son, who is working in a nearby factory and waiting for an alternative accommodation in the western part of the city

Some members of her joint family have already moved out of this Pol and are now settled in Sattdhar and K K Nagar Society in the Sola Road area She does not see any possibility of reviving the old *panch* system in the present context, as there is no mutual trust and respect among the residents

Navi Pol

Navi Pol is a part of eleven *pols* in Shahpur area According to the elders still staying in this Pol, it was built about 250 years ago Initially, this Pol had Kadva Patels (a sub-caste of Patidars), who had come from villages near the Ahmedabad city This Pol has forty-five houses and is divided into two parts with one big gate in the middle of the Pol The first part of the Pol has a wider road and more open space as compared to the second part, which has only a narrow street Two temples (one Jain and the other Hindu) and fifteen commercial establishments operate from these houses Of the remaining twenty-eight houses, twenty-five are occupied and three are vacant

About fifty per cent of the houses are rented out, as the original owners are no longer staying in the Pol In some cases, the owners have occupied the first floor while renting out the ground floor for different uses As the Pol has lost its homogeneous character any personal celebrations are restricted to chosen few in contrast to the old system of inviting everybody in the Pol In fact, in most cases, earlier the neighbours spontaneously came forward and participated in all the activities as if they belonged to the same family During Navaratri, young boys collected contributions from all families and organised the *garba* (traditional group dance) in the Pol

The 'Navi Pol Kadva Patidar Makan Malik No Panch' was very active until recently From every house one person (generally the head of the family) was a member of the *panch* On the father's death, the eldest son became a member of the *panch* The property of the *panch* includes two houses, one flour mill, shops along the road, storage house, vessels, etc The *panch* met monthly to discuss its activities and also for resolving any dispute that may have arisen The *panch* was not registered as a formal organisation (Heritage Cell, AMC, and ACF nd)

Doshi (1974) has discussed the role of the *polio* (watchman) who was engaged by the Pol *panch* to discharge the duties of vigilance *Polio* was required to keep a constant watch over the Pol and was paid by the members of the Pol In some cases the *polios* were allowed to work outside the *pol* during the daytime to supplement their income However, they had to keep their son/wife readily available for the services of the

members of the *pol* But in this Pol there was no *polio* Except during communal disturbances, the main gate of the Pol remains open Families living near the main gate normally take care of closing and opening the gate, if required According to the elders of this Pol, the main work of the *panch* was development and maintenance of services within the Pol, solving the internal disputes, and organising celebration of religious festivals

The sale and purchase of houses was controlled by the fixed rule adopted by the *panch* According to this rule, houses were sold only to Kadva Patels to maintain the homogeneous character of the settlement At the time of selling the house, the buyer had to pay 10 per cent of the selling price to the *panch* and become its member If the house is let out on rent, the leaser had to pay Rs 2 per year to the *panch*

According to Karunashankar Tripathi, an old resident of this Pol, people of this Pol still fondly remember one Ravichand Madhavji, who died about 35 years ago, as the ideal leader of Navi Pol He is still known as an able leader who was strict and impartial in the management of the Pol During his time, no one was allowed to go out of the Pol after 9 00 p m without his permission Smoking in the open area and speaking loudly were prohibited In general, strict rules and regulations governed the behaviour of the residents However, after the death of Madhavji, the situation started changing

Notwithstanding the changed situation, some people still like to live in this Pol For instance, Tarulataben, who is unmarried, and lives alone and gives tuition to school children, feels very safe to live in the Pol, as help from others is always available She strongly believes that *pol* is still the best place for single women to live Many aged people also feel *pol* to be a comfortable place to live They can pass time easily by chatting with the neighbours or sitting quietly in front of their house In case of illness, or other problem, neighbours are always ready to help them

Once Karunashankarbhai was ill and his close relative took him to his new house in Shajanand Residency in Memnagar area of western Ahmedabad The area and the society is supposed to posh with clean environment and all modern amenities like escalator, park, round-the-clock water supply, security system, etc However, he refused to stay there after his recuperation, as he missed his pol lifestyle He was very upset to see people keeping their apartment doors always closed He and his wife even refused to move to UK, where their sons are settled

In 1970, Aadarsh Mitra Mandal built the Prashant Society in Navarangpura area and many families started moving into this new neighbourhood leaving their houses in the Navi Pol. The owners sold their houses to different caste groups placed much lower in the caste

hierarchy As a house grows old, its real estate value depreciates unless it is blessed with the special location or continually upgraded by its owners With depreciation, the house usually passes on to successively low-income groups

Regular communal riots that started from the early 1980s have been identified as another important reason for changes in the settlement pattern of *pols* As soon as the first group of richer households moved out of this Pol, the traditional administrative system was also affected and the *panch* system started declining After 1995, commercial establishments – like printing press, printing of plastic bags, dairy, and offices – started operating in the Pol Due to lack of proper administration and monitoring, the old *panch* has lost its funds and permanent source of income Today it depends on the collection made for specific activities The *panch* had rental income from its properties, but, due to the rent control act, the rent is so low that it is not even enough to pay the annual property tax

Informal discussions with the owners of these commercial establishments revealed that commercialisation is highly influenced by accessibility and linkages, as the Pol is located very close to Teen Darwaja area, which is the most important retail market in Ahmedabad Some commercial activities – like floor mills, tailors, and grocery shops – mostly serve the residents and operate only on the ground floor However, due to commercialisation, parking inside the Pol is becoming difficult

Some families are unhappy and would like to move out of this Pol, as they face problems in finding brides for their sons People are ready to accept marriage proposals for girls from this Pol, but are unwilling to give their daughters/sisters in marriage to its boys Also, the area is perceived as communally sensitive and, hence, young, educated girls do not want to settle in such a *pol* Some families who have recently moved out of the Pol reported lack of privacy in daily life as the major problem of the settlement

Ambilivali Pol

Ambilivali Pol is about 250 years old At the time of its origin, this Pol had only one caste group, namely, Kadva Patels from central Gujarat, and its members were followers of Swaminarayan This Pol has a single entry with a big gate, it has a 1 5-2-meter-wide narrow street in the north-south direction Series of houses, thirty-six in all, are located on either side of the street

In the past, the Pol was managed by the Aadarsh Mitra Mandal Society This Society also started nursery school for children and the

Hanuman Vyayam Mandir (*akhado*) for physical exercise The *panch*, with six members, was very active, and used to take all decisions regarding activities and development of the Pol Activities of the *panch* were supported by the contribution from the residents and also from the earning from properties like two houses, entrance gate, well, six shops, storage house, and rent for the community vessels, etc The *Panch* also resolved disputes among the residents and with nearby *pol*s, too The selling and renting of houses was controlled by the rules of the *panch*, and the houses were sold only to Kadva Patel This Pol did not have any security system, and the main gate was never closed except during the communal riots

This Pol is well known, as it is believed to be the harbinger of BAPS (Bochasanwasi Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha), a part of the Swaminarayan sect This Pol is treated like a holy place, as it is blessed by three *gunatit sadhu*s Shastriji Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj, and Pramukh Swami Maharaj

After the prolonged riots of 1984, residents of this Pol started moving out and started selling their houses to people belonging to different caste groups Death of a few *panch* members is also cited as an important reason for such development, as no one took initiative to stop the out-migration When members of the BAPS realised the problem and wanted to preserve this Pol, they started buying properties from the old residents The old *panch* system was finally dissolved in 1987 and BAPS took over the management of the Pol After the 1992 communal riot that followed the Godhra incident, the remaining original residents moved out by selling/donating their properties to BAPS According to some old residents who are still staying in this Pol, residents did not face much problem during the riots, as they have had good relations with the Muslim community living in the nearby *pol*s/areas However, the army was posted to maintain law and order in this area during the 2002 riots

There are now thirty-six houses in this Pol and sixty-five households are residing in them One of the old houses has been renovated as the Swaminarayan temple, which receives visitors from far-off places Ten houses out of the thirty-six houses are under the BAPS, but most of the time these houses remain locked Commercial ingression is also seen in this Pol, as two houses have converted into commercial buildings The common property of the *panch* was sold and the common well is filled with rubble

The Swaminarayan temple is declared as a heritage place, and the Heritage Department of the Government of Gujarat has laid a pavement in the Pol On full-moon day, more than 6,000 followers of the Swaminarayan sect visit the temple On this day, residents of the Pol offer

lemon juice to devotees *Shibirs* (special religious gatherings) are also organised on a regular basis. Along with the Swaminarayan volunteers, the residents have undertaken massive improvement activities in last few years However, the Kadva Patidar families would like to leave the Pol, as they are finding it difficult to get suitable match for their boys and girls, and for other problems like lack of privacy, etc

Conclusion

The *panch* system that existed in these *pols* is either dormant or ceased to exist due to various reasons In the first two *pols*, the residents did not see any hope of its revival Residents of these *pols* are either ignorant of or not interested in the activities in the *pol* Infighting is the biggest problem in the daily life of Vadvali Pol, and lack of interest and leadership in Navi Pol has become a barrier for organising the residents under one institution Community participation is very difficult for the residents, as they have a high level of internal disputes Encroachment of open space is also identified as major problem, as many residents are keeping their household belongings in the community open space and restricting the movement of people Often this results in fight among the residents It also creates an unhealthy environment and space for breeding of mosquitoes

The homogeneous character of the *pols* has changed through gradual shift in their social composition The original residents, who are still living in the *pols*, remarked that due to changes in social groupings the status of the *pols* has lowered, as low-caste and low-income groups have moved into the *pols* This is accentuating the exodus of the original inhabitants However, in some cases, families have moved out due to increase in family size and improvement in their economic condition The ingress of commercial activities as seen in many Pols is also contributing to the changes In general, the changes in the *pols* are also linked to the changes taking place in the form of infrastructure development in the western part of the city and the neglect of the walled city area

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Democracy and Leadership: The Gendered Voice in Politics

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In Assam, be it in the Maomaria revolt, nationalist movement, or a more recent constitutional mandate for political participation, women have seldom transcended institutionalised patriarchy Most often, voices of change come from agencies of male politics where the politics behind conventional definition of the 'political' is never questioned A fuller grasp of women as political subjects or agents must, therefore, draw on a more complex conceptualisation of the field of power than is routinely encountered today In this article an attempt is made to evaluate the political empowerment of women in Assam after the implementation of the 73rd Amendment, which facilitates the representation of women in politics

[Keywords Assam, empowerment of women, traditional governance, panchayati raj, 73rd Amendment]

Kate Millet, in her essay 'Theory of Sexual Politics' (2005), moots that politics has to refer to structured power relationships, arrangements whereby one group of persons is controlled by another One might also add that, though an ideal politics might simply be conceived of as the arrangement of human life on agreeable and rational principles from where the entire notion of power over others should be banished, this is not what constitutes the political as we know it It is within this context that I address sexual politics, and use the category of women as a status category with political implications

Feminist studies all over reiterate that a truly political state of affairs operates between the two sexes to perpetuate a series of oppressive circumstances The subordinated group thus has inadequate redress through

existing political institutions, and is deterred from organising into conventional political struggle and opposition Millet shows that, though the concept of dominance and subordination in sexual relationship becomes apparent for a lay examiner, what eludes us is the 'concept of birthright priority whereby males *rule* females, giving rise to the most ingenious form of interior colonisation' (*ibid* 38) This form of segregation is more rigorous and enduring than any other form of stratification Thus, sexual dominion is the most pervasive ideology of our culture and provides the most fundamental concept of power Deriving from this concept of power, 'political representation' of women poses an interesting terminological anachronism As stated by Judith Butler (2005), on the one hand, *representation* serves as the operative term within a political process that seeks to extend legitimacy to women as political subjects, on the other hand, *representation* is the normative function of a language which either reveals or distorts the truth about the category of women It is in this development of the language that either fully or adequately represents women that I seek to ground political visibility and participation for women in Assam

Entrenched ideologies that assume that politics is the world of men and that women's role should be confined to the domestic domain serve to back up myths about women in politics without addressing the core of what constitutes politics, namely, power That politics is a struggle not for authority alone, but for the power it entails to make changes, is not always recognised, restricting the space of the political to public institutions alone In speaking about women in politics, therefore, one has to widen the definition of political space, where one begins first by questioning the very politics behind conventional definitions of the 'political' According to Seemanthini Niranjana (2003), this could include two parameters first, women's participation in formal politics, that is, in government, through representation in political governance and decision making, and second, women's participation in struggles and movements of various kinds outside the conventional sphere of politics Through an evaluation of the role of women in the Telengana peasant insurrectionary movement and anti-arrack agitation, she reveals how women rearticulate the space of the political by a negotiation of the so-called public and private issues

However, conceptualisation of the arena of empowerment of women that is only derived from the politics of sexual representation will be found wanting, unless we examine how modernisation/development impacted on women It is, thus, essential to develop an understanding of the extent to which women have become 'modernised' social subjects with political implications In their study of women living in the urban slum of Khidirpur in Kolkata, Jashodhara Bagchi and Himani Bannerji

(nd) have dealt with the question of how empowerment of women could be best facilitated through the creation and fostering of grassroots organisations, childcare services, education for women – for both quality of life and development of skills – for the purpose of advancing their citizenship and participation

In this article, I have attempted to explore empowerment though political participation of women in Assam from the early historical stages of Ahom state through the political mobilisation of the Assamese middle class in the Indian freedom struggle and women's leadership in Bodo insurgent movement to the more contemporary democratic era of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) It is only in the last two stages that traces of women as modernised social subjects with political implications become visible, and aspirations emerge to create democratic support structures that can sustain an ambience of extreme political awareness and participation among women

North-East India, especially Assam, with its traditional geopolitical characteristics has found itself at the conjunction between tribal and caste Hindu social formations It has, thus, often taken pride in its self-proclaimed egalitarian social set-up vis-à-vis the ruthless segmentation of caste and gender in other parts of India The myth of a casteless society has been demystified here by instances of proselytisation of tribal communities, who in this specific case were the 'constructed untouchables'. Gender and its different ramifications, however, have gone totally unnoticed and sometimes even glorified as the only instance in Indian society where women enjoy equal status It is a fact that Assam has traditionally been devoid of practices such as dowry, child marriage, bride burning, and female infanticide that are prevalent in most other parts of India Moreover, mobility of women in Assam is also higher due to factors like the absence of *purdah*, and occupational caste-groups, which also resulted in a higher degree of caste flexibility A long-standing influence of the tribal work-pattern, where the village economy at times revolves primarily around women's labour and female entrepreneurship, has also led to greater physical freedom This argument, however, can be contested on grounds of tribal and caste differences All these have to a large extent augmented opinions of a higher social status for women, which should have then logically ensured higher and adequate degree of political participation and representation for women in Assam.

A historical and contemporary analysis of different political mobilisations in Assam, however, will reveal inadequate representation of women at every instance This is not to say that women did not endeavour to create spaces for their own empowerment The organised

movements created political spaces with a sexist bias, using women to mobilise only to contribute in numbers, but ignored and marginalised them when they voiced their own agenda Thus, in Assam too, the limitations in the very language of defining women and representing the category adequately, in both the sphere of formal politics and the informal domain of struggles and movement, makes their representation within a political process that seeks to legitimise women as political subjects over-ambitious Participation in the political will thus have to be traced within individual experiences of negotiating the private and the public issues in day to day life and within voices, sometimes single, sometimes collective, which have gone unnoticed and unarticulated within the male-dominated public sphere

Hence, the feminist discourse in Assam deserves greater attention and emphasis, and it has to be seen as part of a wider and more universal feminist discourse of Indian idealism Although gender relations deviate here from the more traditional theoretical framework within which Indian women as a whole can identify, especially due to its proximity to tribal ethos and a Vaishnavite tradition, the absence of traits such as caste disabilities should not be taken as absence of a need to identify other more significant variables such as the patriarchal and sexist bias exhibited by the Vaishnavite cults or *Sattras*[1] in the region, local customary laws, or the lack of political participation of women in traditional bodies of local governance

Assam's Women: Confrontations and Negotiations in History

Historically, the political arena in Assam, starting from its kings to the socio-political organisation of the *pyke* system,[2] has been largely male dominated Whenever women have actively involved themselves, it has been within the wider purview of male activism Few women like Phuleshwari Kubori had occupied the Ahom throne for a while, the legitimacy of her authority was derived from husband King Shivshingha Other women, like Mula Gabhoru, Romoni Gabhoru, and Joymoti, because of their exemplary strength and wisdom, can be regarded as historically extraordinary in their achievements Towards the end of the Ahom rule, we find mention of Radha and Rukmini, who led a guerrilla force against the royalist troops and liberated the entire territory north of Burhi-Dihing River in the Maomaria rebellion[3] In fact, both these women, along with other rebels like Naharkhora Saikia and Ragh Neog, were later put to death. The defeat of this insurrection of 1769-1770 was followed by a general massacre of the Maomarias all over Assam It is important to mention here that the Maomaria rebels were primarily from

among the tribal peasantry, and in the tribal social structure, labour has always been shared equally between the sexes. It is, thus, nothing unusual to find women aggressive and participating in the rebellion Maomaria revolt was a direct consequence of exploitation and dispossession by the Ahom monarchy and their imposed socioeconomic structure, that is, the *pyke* system Being part of this exploited class, women surely identified with the subjugation and took up arms to support their men when required It has been noticed that in times of conflict and crisis, women have often negotiated private issues like household, childrearing, sexuality, etc with issues of the public domain like class consciousness, exploitation, wage labour, and inequality Politics, in such a situation, is not just limited to the outer public domain, where women are dispossessed of rights of decision making, instead, it concretises its presence as an extension of home or the private domain

The political scene in Assam was marked by extreme anarchy and chaos when the British annexed it in 1826 In fact, the British government had many a time claimed legitimacy on grounds of establishing order and governance in the otherwise chaotic tribal belt of Assam Through rational governance and modern education system, the British cleared the way for the emergence of an educated and westernised middle class to take care of their local administration. Like in other parts of India, in Assam too it was this class which became the forerunner of Indian nationalism In Assam, however, it would probably be more precise to first refer to the creation of an Assamese identity, which by now seemed to be fragmented by the caste and tribe divide and, hence, needed to be reiterated through identity politics within a wider nationalist identity Thus, a male-centric educated civil society crystallised with a mission to revive language, literature, and socio-cultural identity, and to interpret tradition in a way that would glorify its culture in the eyes of the rational West While the Vedic scriptures were quoted to immortalise the exalted status of female *rishis* like Gargi and Maitreyi, a more pragmatic stand advocated social reforms like women's education, widow remarriage, and abolition of sati, child marriage, and dowry Female education in Assam was a consequence of the growing sensibilities of Assam's Brahmanic middle-class towards social reforms and women's empowerment Gunabhiram Baruah, one of the foremost thinkers and reformists of Assam, wrote to Baptist missionaries to mobilise opinions on female education and widow remarriage through *Arunodoy*, a pre-independence magazine published from Shibosagar Although it is widely accepted that status of women in India from the early 18th century experienced extreme deterioration, there is limited discussion on the conditions that could be held responsible for it In Assam, the establishment of a non-agricultural

capitalist economy by the British destroyed its earlier self-sufficient village economy Traditionally, every Assamese woman would weave cloth from the cotton grown on tribal lands, but with the coming of the British, it was no longer possible to procure cotton in this manner and instead women had to buy cotton clothes imported from England Moreover, the indiscriminate sale of opium and indigenous liquor made life of village women unbearable

In 1885, with the establishment of the Indian National Congress, a pan-Indian nationalist sentiment pervaded Indian society Assam too adopted the higher principles of the Congress Educational backwardness among Assamese women made their presence in the initial stages of its formation rather insignificant By the early 20th century, however, through concerted efforts of Assam Association, Rayot Sabha, Assam Sahitya Sabha, and Students organisations, a small batch of educated and enlightened women like Chandra Prabha Saikiani, Amol Prabha Das, and Rajbala Das took a leading role among women These women are known for their active participation in students' organisations and *sahitya sabhas* (literary associations) where they repeatedly voiced their opposition to the sale of country liquor, opium, and casteism and untouchability Although few in number, under the leadership of these dynamic women, women's participation in political life became more visible in the later years

Mahatma Gandhi's insistence on the importance of their effective contribution in achieving independence not only inspired women but also empowered them by chalking out ways in which women could assert their voices He appealed to women to participate in the non-cooperation movement against the British, by rejecting all foreign goods and going back to their traditional practice of weaving their own clothes By politically taking notice of an age-old activity which has always been confined to the household, Gandhi gave Assamese women self-pride and dignity in the public sphere. According to Aparna Mahanta (2002), in 1914, the progressive nationalists of Assam made a genuine effort to mobilise women like in other parts of India, evoking symbolic icons like Sita and Durga who epitomised qualities that were the need of that hour like sacrifice and patience combined with the vigour to fight the evil In Assam, the legend of Joymoti and her exemplary tale of sacrifice and loyalty for both her husband and the nation got a new lease of life when, in 1914, with the concerted efforts of the growing educated middle-class Joymoti Day was first celebrated in Shibosagar Although participation of women in such celebrations was largely limited to politically active families, sonnets and plays composed in her name brought the message of nationalism and sacrifice to common people From 1928 to 1930, a

women's magazine, *Ghar Jeuti*, was published from Shibosagar, which carried many compositions on the life of Joymoti Women did not hesitate to accept this icon as their own, because Joymoti's physical pain, her experience of subjugation was not alien to experiences of general women What was significant was the insinuation of spiritual empowerment that such a sacrifice entailed in the discourse of nationalism

The emergence of the *bhadra mahila* middle-class model emulating the greater tradition within the Hindu-fold celebrated higher principles of the Indian womanhood that was primarily subverted by men's lust for power and the hierarchical political structures from which women as a rule are excluded This popular ideology 'othered' women from the marginal ethno-tribal groups, who, by virtue of their socioeconomic marginalisation, were anyway outside the pale of the dominant Hindu society in Assam

Women Leadership and Insurgency in Assam

'In an otherwise doomed situation in India, women in North East India have played a very important role as Peacemakers not just between families, clans, and tribes but underground insurgents called national workers and Government of India as a unique and unparalleled instance in entire South Asia' (Nag 2006 211) The Naga Mothers Association, The Mothers Union, Tura (Meghalaya), Meira Peibes of Manipur, and Naga Womens Union of Manipur, and Mizo Women's Federation are indicative of the evolving of feminisation of the civic space beyond ethnic identity and imposed subjectivity for women in societies marked by extreme militarism and insurgency The peace-building activities of Naga women's groups have produced a social consciousness in Naga society that upholds womanhood, and human values and rights, recognising peace as the prerequisite for any human development It validates women as making a difference, especially in reaching out to bitterly divided Naga armed factions and fostering reconciliation and healing It has persuaded the top leaders of the armed groups to recognise women as significant resource for peace-building and legitimised their identity as stakeholders in a plural peace process

According to Anuradha Dutta (2008), the members of the All Bodo Women Welfare Federation, in spite of being both participants and victims of the major insurgent movement in Assam, actively work for sustainable peace today These women in particular were strong supporters of the movement for identity in the Bodoland areas organised by the students under the leadership of Upendra Brahma The Bodo women, organised under the banner of the All Assam Tribal Women's

Welfare Federation (AATWWF), joined the movement for the adoption of the Roman script way back in 1974 Later, when the Bodo movement established a military wing to embark on an armed struggle, it trained the womenfolk in arms, and from 1989 onwards, some women did join the arms wing AATWWF was not in favour of this decision In 1993, AATWWF changed its name to All Bodo Women's Welfare Federation (ABWWF) Since All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) could not reach the nook and corner of Bodoland, it took the help of the women's group to mobilise people in support of the movement The women's group explained the ABSU's programme to the people, convincing them about their demands, and taught them to remain alert about army and police raids It approached people to help ABSU with food and shelter It had good networking in every nook and corner of Bodo dominated areas

The Bodo women, in spite of being so active in the Bodo movement, have not been a part of the formal peace process Post reconciliation also, ABWWF has failed in finding for itself a political space In the election to the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC), the Bodoland People's Progressive Front (BPPF), which was formed in April 2005, was divided in May One faction comprised the Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT) leaders and surrendered cadres, while ABSU, which took the lead in the formation of the BPPF, comprised the other faction In Kokrajhar, several leaders of the disbanded militant outfit filed nominations against the BPPF President Rabiram Narzary The BTC Chief Hangrama Mahillary supported former comrade Manoj Kumar Brahma Though initially the ABWWF, a key player in Bodo politics, lent its support to BPPF, it withdrew from that party as not a single woman candidate was nominated The influential women's body extended support to the former BLT leader instead, who stood as the rebel candidate against the official BPPF candidate

If we see the lack of effective political leadership of Bodo women in the Bodo movement as a crisis of participation and motivation, we will overlook the latent structure and the fruitless effort in fighting institutional governance where women's political potentials have never been recognised traditionally Being ethnically bound, these women have never been exposed to the democratic governance of decentralisation as in PRIs The true potential of women's political participation can be explored when fearless and sensitised women are provided with specific kinds of institutional support which go beyond technical training They need support to build solidarity amongst women, through strengthening links between women's organisations and elected bodies They need information about innovative organisations which enhance women's lives such as health providers and credit institutions It is also necessary

to strengthen women's sense of common identity by articulating the elements of feminist consciousness and presenting it as the special quality of women's leadership There has been insufficient elaboration of what that leadership can offer as different from men's leadership Such an elaboration through feminist discourse and action is essential for this revolution to deliver the promise it holds for peace making

Democratic Institutions vis-à-vis Traditional Governance

The North-East India consists of seven states of the Indian Union – namely, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Tripura – covering 8 per cent of the total geographical area and 3 78 per cent of the total population of the country A large part of this region is governed by the fifth and sixth schedules of the Constitution of India The Panchayats (Extension to the Schedule Areas) Act, 1996 extends the 73rd Amendment to the fifth schedule areas Three states, namely, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Nagaland, which are covered by the sixth schedule, are exempted from the purview of this Amendment The sixth schedule envisages establishment of Autonomous District Councils (ADCs), which have been endowed with legislative, administrative, and judicial powers No law of the union or the state government in respect of the legislative powers conferred on ADCs could be extended to those areas without the latter's approval ADCs are also empowered to constitute Village Councils and Village Courts While ADCs have the advantage of legislative powers which PRIs do not, they do not make provision for reservation for women

Thus, in the North-East we find two sets of democratic institutions at work a modern democratic system and a traditional system The traditional system has never recognised the rights of women as primary decision-makers in matters of community issues like inter-ethnic conflicts, crisis management, social sanctions, etc and then there are the six schedule areas where women have negligible say in their traditional institutions of local self-governance In Assam, out of twenty-three districts only two (N C Hills and Karbi Anglong) fall under the sixth schedule area, the other twenty-one districts fall under the modern democratic institution of panchayati raj with 33 per cent reservation for women

73rd Amendment: Its Gender Perspective

The Gandhian ideology of self-governance or *swaraj* based on an economy of self-reliance and self-sufficiency of villages, adopted village

as the basic unit of administration Gandhi's ideas were based on the ancient village republic model Although his ideas did not find much space in the early modernising sections of the emerging political leadership, it could not be completely resisted. The Directive Principles of State Policy (Article 40c) of the Constitution directed that the state should take steps to organise village panchayats and endow them with such power and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government Community Development and Panchayati Raj were launched in 1952 seeking to harness people's power and channelise their participation for social reconstruction Following this, in 1959, with the submission of the Balwantrai Mehta Committee Report, it was provided for a three-tier system of grassroots institutions from the village to the district levels By 1962, the system was in force in the entire country except a few states and, by March 1973, there were 222,050 village panchayats covering 5 65 lakh villages in the country Finally, the 73rd Amendment, in December 1992, provided for the reservation of 33 per cent of seats for women, apart from those for the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, in panchayats

Constitutional reservation for women has changed the political governance in the country The number of women whom the PRIs have brought into politics is governing, be it in one village, or a larger area such as a district While Karnataka and West Bengal have experienced two full-terms of women's participation in PRIs, Assam had its first experience in 2001. where 9,903 women participated. The sheer number of women that PRIs have brought into the political system has made a difference The percentage of women at various levels of political activity has shifted dramatically, from 4-5 per cent before the introduction of the panchayati raj to 25-40 per cent since. The difference is also qualitative, because these women, when they enter politics, are expected to bring their experience in governance of civic society into governance of the state In this way, they are expected to make the state sensitive to issues of poverty, inequality, and gender injustice

· This part of the paper is based on an 11-month project (from February to December 2004) titled 'Participation of Women in Local Self Governance in Assam' This is the first study conducted to evaluate the efficacy of the implementation of the 73rd Amendment in Assam The study shows that women are not only hesitant and often discouraged, but also exhibit a high degree of political indifference along with a lack of sustained awareness It is only in the case of a reserved seat that a woman is seen to come fórward, often coaxed or pushed by her husband or father or, as seen in certain places, by her entire family or community The main reason given for her lack of involvement in the political

domain was the huge bulk of time that women spend on domestic work, childrearing, and other mundane activities that are viewed as her primary responsibility. Limiting her primary space to the hearth and household activities precluded any social activity outside woman's domain as an additional burden She. thus, had an option in this sphere Viewed as an option, which was too liberating and self-promoting for a woman, her participation in social decision-making can very well be done away with Traditional institutions of governance among the Khasis or Boros had never considered it important to make women participate in community affairs or empower them in economic decision-making

Tiplut Nongbri (2000) shows that while Khasi women have comparative security under matriliny, they are not entirely free from subordination The egalitarian principle, which underlines matrilineal descent, is subverted by men's lust for power and the hierarchical political structures from which women as a rule are excluded Women's traditional exclusion from politics has effectively aided men in this regard, and with the Khasis' accession to the Indian Union and the political modernisation of the region, the link between ethnicity, patriarchy, and the state, which was lying dormant in the traditional political set-up, has come to the fore In fact, socio-cultural impediments, most of the time pushed women into a closed domestic domain burdened by mundane but extremely strenuous physical activity Democratic institutions, such as the panchayat system after the 73rd Amendment, have for the first time attempted to bring women into a system of governance upholding the principle of equality and justice

Politicisation of Women in Assam: Towards a Workable Definition

The Indian political system, despite the various political rights for women enshrined in the Constitution, has been largely unable to provide a legitimate political space to women That political participation of women is still peripheral despite the growing literacy rate and so-called social emancipation makes one reconsider the earlier accepted categories of evaluating women's empowerment through indicators of quantity and quality of political participation External indices such as women's voting behaviour, representation in political parties and ideologies, and electoral candidature and holding of public office do not provide any insight beyond numbers Just as the earlier conception of the Assamese women amidst a social environment free of *purdah*, dowry, female infanticide, and easy mobility constructed a false sense of gender emancipation, so does any assessment of contemporary political participation and democratisation of women through constitutional safeguards like the 73rd

Amendment through indicators of quantity and quality of women's participation, women's voting behaviour, representation in political parties, electoral candidature, and holding of public office

One, thus, needs to look beyond both a traditional social structure smeared with tribal egalitarianism and contemporary democratic machinery celebrating the numbers inducted and ensured through the implementation of reserved seats for women in panchayat elections The project on the Participation of Women in Rural Self-Governance in Assam recorded an impressionable participation of 9,903 women in the panchayat elections held in Assam on 27 and 31 December 2001 Elections were held for twenty Zila Parishads, 187 Anchalik Parishads, and 2,053 Gaon Panchayats Out of a total 390 Zilla Parishad members elected, 236 came from the general category, and 117, from the reserved category In all 7,857 women were elected to the Gaon Panchayats [4]

The study – conducted in three districts of Assam, namely, Sonitpur, Cachar, and Nalbari, covering sixteen villages and twelve panchayats (coming under some of the worst flood-affected blocks of Assam) – revealed some very interesting details about the exact nature of this participation Binda Rani Sinha (Anchalik Parishad member) from Burunga Gaon Panchayat (Kalain Block, Cachar) was found to be extremely articulate and independent, in spite of having been elected through a reserved category for women Being active in politics from 13 years of age, she herself took the decision to contest the election Her aim is to do something for the society, especially for the women Before the election, she formed almost 60 self-help groups of women, as a result of which women have been empowered economically She commented that economic empowerment influences decision-making in every sphere of life Asked about the problems that she faced being a woman in the panchayat, hesitantly though, she complained about male domination

The primary obstacles which make women weak planners and policy implementers in the local self-government in Assam, as delineated by women themselves, are burden of household work, lack of family and community support, lack of financial support, lack of political consciousness, cultural barriers, educational poverty, and male domination in decision making The main reason cited for lack of women's involvement in the political domain was the huge amount of time that they spend on domestic work, childrearing, and other mundane activities These are viewed as a woman's responsibility and duty, limiting her space to the hearth and household chores Any social activity outside this woman's domain is seen as an additional burden on her

Efforts at sensitisation on PRIs and their democratic implications for women were met with enthusiasm and eagerness, and the women

seemed to be waiting for some objective direction and guidance Thus, though women seemed highly conscious about their rights, they are unaware as to how and where to demand the rights This vulnerability is often exploited by unscrupulous people and political groups The Katigorah Part III Village (under Katigorah Gaon Panchayat in Cachar) showed a strong presence of women activists who are active and sensitive not only to women's issues but to also to other socio-political, economic, and environmental issues This has created an ambience of extreme political awareness and participation among women which is often marred by apathy and hopelessness too

The study proposed to understand women's participation in the wider political process through her role as a decision maker at various levels from within the premises of her household through community, village, and district to state bodies Only a particular level of assertion and articulation within the family, when provided with conducive social platform for political participation and mobilisation, can be translated into political leadership within the wider society Within this paradigm, decision making was particularly found missing in every sphere of women Be it domestic decision-making in the family budget or access and control over family resources, like land, utensils, furniture, gold, and livestock, decisions made by women were found to be of little consequence Some women, however, felt that they had more say in community property, for example, temple, road, village field, etc It was seen that once when men had wanted to use an open field for the construction of a club house, women rebelled and forced the authorities to build a primary school on it In another case, a road was constructed not to lessen the distance between the village and the highway but as desired by women to bring the drinking water source closer When it came to participation in political process or community welfare, the decision was more often than not made in consultation with male members Husband or father was considered the primary decision-maker, the guide who decides the course a woman's decision should take, because of her innate nature, which is a conjunction of vulnerability and aggression Just as her vulnerability needs protection, her aggression needs to be controlled Within the panchayat system decision making by women is a utopia

Traditional institutions and customary laws prevalent among tribal people, though portray an egalitarian socioeconomic structure, is discriminatory when it comes to women's rights in traditional governance and customary law As found among the Bodos, customary law had never considered it important to make women participate in community affairs or empower them in economic decision-making In fact, socio-cultural

values pushed women into a closed domestic domain, burdened by mundane but extremely strenuous economic activity Thus, in spite of an impressive voter turnout (about 90 per cent) by women, as in Burhigang Panchayat of Maralgaon Village which was selected for study because it had reserved seats for both scheduled caste and women, not a single women had a sustained interest or capacity to hold on to political positions Most of the elected members had very low level of political awareness and their contribution to developmental activities is almost invisible The primary reasons for lack of political motivation among women are patriarchal domination, misguidance, manipulation, and proxy representation Most women felt that, had it been an open constituency, not a single woman would have been allowed to contest Some of the women, who lost, preferred to get back to the household chores, work in the land, childcare, etc They believe that winning from an open constituency requires considerable amount of money and muscle power, it difficult for honest and dedicated women to come forward

The other vital area which has proved to be a major hindrance to women's participation is the fear of social ostracism and entrenched socio-cultural values regarding women There cases where elected women had to face the most demeaning kind of character assassination and scandals Odd working hours and close association with male members make them easy prey to slander and sexual abuse The case of President of Boroma Panchayat, Nalbari Rita Dutta is an example of how, when women deviate from their normal and submissive code of conduct, they can be subjected to the easiest form of violation, that is, infliction on her self-respect and sexual modesty Dutta was accused by male bullies in her own party of participating in pornography, and was subjected her to judicial custody during which she had to undergo a virginity test

Conclusion

Bringing women into politics was an act of positive discrimination It was the pressure of law, combined with the political imperative of winning elections, which changed political parties' perceptions of women's limited capacity for public office Experience in other states like Karnataka and West Bengal has proved that PRIs have helped to change women's perceptions of themselves Women have gained a sense of empowerment by asserting control over resources, officials, and, most of all, by challenging men Panchayati raj has also given many women a greater understanding of the workings of politics, in particular the importance of political parties On the other hand, in the case of some women, involvement in PRIs has helped them affirm their identity as

women with particular and shared experiences This self-perception arises from two sources. from women's own sense of their shared experience and from attitudes and imagery imposed on them by men It appears that gender can supersede class and party lines The 73rd Amendment has opened the possibility for women to actively engage in politics

However, increasing the representation of women will not automatically lead to a more gendered analysis of the issues confronting local government Nor will it necessarily raise the profile of women's needs and interests in the policy agenda, given that elected women often act as proxy for men's views at the councils, being advised by their male relatives. But there will be a time when, given this opportunity and experience, a minority of women will join politics because of their leadership qualities or feminist consciousness Some of the ways in which women, through PRIs, are changing governance elsewhere are evident in the issues they choose to tackle water, alcohol abuse, education, health, and domestic violence Women also express different values Women value proximity, whether it is to drinking-water source, fuel source, crèche, health centre, court of justice, or office of administration. The enormous expansion of women's representation in decentralised government structures has highlighted the advantages of proximity, namely, the redress of grievance and (most important of all) the ability to mobilise struggle at a local level where it is most meaningful. Thus, women help to radicalise local government, and Assam will definitely not be far behind

Obstacles to the realisation of the PRIs' transformative potential are many, especially for Assam which has not really reached that stage of political maturity for its women There continues to be resistance to devolving power and funds from centres of (male) power to the periphery Women still face considerable handicaps in their involvement in politics for example, inadequate education, burden of reproductive and productive roles, lack of self-confidence, and opposition of entrenched cultural and religious views There is thus a need to provide women with specific kinds of support which go beyond technical training They need support to build solidarity amongst women, through strengthening links between women's organisations and elected bodies They need information about innovative organisations which enhance women's lives such as health providers and credit institutions It is also necessary to strengthen women's sense of common identity by articulating the elements of a feminist consciousness and presenting it as the special quality of women's leadership There has been insufficient elaboration of what that leadership has to offer which distinguishes it from men's

leadership and which commends it as something special Such an elaboration through feminist discourse and action is essential for this revolution to deliver the promise it holds

There is also a need for a more enabling environment which would allow the panchayati raj to become a process for the empowerment of women, not to mention other social groups who have been left out of participation in representative governance. Such an environment would include legal frameworks and services as well as packages of technical support Ironically, it is development assistance agencies which often provide vigorous examples of patriarchal obstruction to people-led development The UN agencies, for example, are often obstacles to efforts to shift power structures from the civil service to the citizen The entire process of restructuring the national political and administrative system started as recently as January 1994 It is, therefore, too early to assess how far women's entry into formal structures of government as a result of the panchayati raj has changed the direction and practices of development, especially in relation to sensitive packages of social and economic security, the reduction of inequality, the safeguarding of livelihoods and the environment, and the reduction of domestic violence and other forms of oppression of and discrimination against women, in other words, all the elements of a feminist agenda for social and economic progress

Thus, we can conclude that in spite of the widely held conviction of the elevated social status of women in Assam, in reality their plight is only marginally better than their counterparts in other parts of the country the primary reasons being poverty, illiteracy, and entrenched customs and traditions In order for women to break this barrier and come out into the open to freely voice and participate in the political arena, one would need to exert immense mental and physical strength This strength can be achieved only when economic status improves with education and awareness regarding problems and their solutions Education at this point appears to be the only solution to break the shackles of archaic beliefs and tradition, gender bias superstitions, etc Implementation of the 73rd Amendment in Assam, though at this point seems to have just about managed to increase participation of women in politics only numerically, without really contributing in changing governance qualitatively, its significance in long-term participation of women in mainstream politics and decision making cannot be ignored This study highlights an undeniable feature that, with better access to the knowledge of the panchayat act, training and capacity building of men and women alike, the institution can only be the most viable means of rural upliftment and human capital generation

Empowerment of women by eradicating poverty, illiteracy, entrenched socio-cultural values and patriarchal ideologies through sensitisation and capacity-building are some of the vital areas of intervention Women are now asking for more support by women in the functioning of democratic machinery, breaking down caste-class continuum, development of infrastructure, access to information and proximity of resources, and fair allocation of government incentives Women have indicated that lack of school, drinking water, health centre, sanitation facilities, market, post office, library, cultural centre or community hall, etc are the major issues for them Environmental degradation in the form of large-scale felling of trees is another area of concern expressed by the women

Although there is no constitutional obstacle in the path of women in assuming political status, in reality, there still exist socioeconomic impediments which make it difficult for them to have complete access the political resources and instruments available to enhance their social and economic status Women are most vulnerable to exploitation, both within their home and in their work place, because of the patriarchal social order that perpetuates entrenched social dicta and lack of self-confidence and assertion Major government policies for overall development and capacity-building of women like micro-credit, literacy, infrastructure development, reproductive healthcare, etc , have more or less suffered due to lack of awareness on the part of women and also due to lack of sensitisation about these development programmes In this context, it is worth mentioning that, though women put in equal and more often extra hours of work, there exists a gross disparity in remunerations In the tea gardens, in spite of the provision of equal wage for equal work, women are still discriminated in work allocation heavier and more paying work is not given to women In plucking too, the permitted weight of tea-leaf plucked by women is less than that allowed by men, in spite of the fact that women are still considered better quality pluckers than men

Notes

1 *Sattaras* are institutions of socio-cultural heritage of Assam originally established by the Vaishnavite Saint Shankardev who hails from this region

2 The *pyke* system was a sort of forced compulsory labour to the Ahom state (for details, see Gait 1962 239-40)

3 Maomaria is a Vaishnavite sect, and the name applies to disciples of Maomara Sattra Although the followers of this sect belonged to different communities like Moran, Chutia, Cachari, Kaivartya, Brahmin, Kalita, and Kayasta, its close association with lower castes was noted with alarm by conservatives

4 The election data were collected from the Directorate of Panchayat, Government of Assam, Guwahati

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Race and Gender: From Double Burden to Acute Advantage

Liela Groenewald

The intersection of race and gender identity is primarily recognised in accounts of cumulative obstacles experienced by certain black women A study among South African students suggests that this double burden theory may be extended to the other end of the spectrum In a study at a Johannesburg University, white men were set apart from all others by a failure to recognise racism, while women, both black and white, were most likely to acknowledge discrimination To explain this, a position of acute advantage, contributing to a shared insensitivity to discrimination, may be proposed with respect to white men

[Keywords double burden theory, gender, race, South Africa, whiteness]

The South African change of state in 1994 has created the globally popular notion of a miracle transition from repressive, exploitative, and authoritarian rule of black people by a white minority, to the peaceful and vibrant coexistence of a multitude of heritage groups in the land of possibly the world's best-loved living leader, Nelson Mandela Under apartheid, South Africa was the world's laboratory of the effects of legally enforced race separation and discrimination Today, many doors have opened for this mix of people to brush sides in workplaces and public spaces Gay Seidman argues that

> the thrilling release of political prisoners, the end of apartheid's strict racial segregation, the first democratic elections – all these have been far more visible than the re-invention of South Africa as a more-or-less ordinary society, which may serve as a basis for making larger claims about racial capitalism in an era of globalization, post-colonial state formation, and even race relations' (1999 420)

What can sociologists learn from contemporary South African society?

Contextualising South Africa

To put change in South Africa in perspective, some historical context is necessary The following overview is based on the most recently published comprehensive history of South Africa, edited by Herman Giliomee and Bernard Mbenga (2007).

Early South African history is not known in detail Giliomee and Mbenga (*ibid* 6-53) discuss numerous highlights from the time of the first peoples until early colonial history Fossil discoveries support the theory that humankind evolved in southern, eastern and North Africa, and South African specimens are some of the best preserved in the world Although it is known that San ancestors had established themselves across southern Africa as early as 14,000 years ago, very little is known about the cultures, languages, and religions of people who inhabited the area prior to 1200 The socially and economically complex Mapungubwe Kingdom was established in the area that is known as Zimbabwe today from approximately 1200 Still, during the Iron Age, this was followed, across the area of the present-day South Africa, by the establishment of a series of Nguni, Sesotho, and SeTswana settlements that more likely shared East African origins These groups established villages, trade routes and agriculture, domesticated animals, and mined gold, copper, and iron By the 17th century, the San and Khoi-Khoi were established as the dominant of South Africa's first nations, and it was they who faced the first colonisers Today, they are virtually extinct, largely due to a combination of the scourge of colonialism and environmental trauma Apart from a loss of cultivatable land to the colonial administration, and a series of cattle raids, the Khoi-Khoi's fate was irrevocably sealed by a pox epidemic in 1713

The beginnings of colonial rule were haphazard, but relatively quickly led to the consolidation of rule over larger territories that form part of the present-day South Africa (*ibd* 40-91) After earlier landings at the Cape by Portuguese and British seafarers, officials of 'what may be called the world's first multinational company', the Dutch Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie, established a midway port for Dutch ships and sailors *en route* to India and other Asian trading area in 1652 As the Dutch population at the Cape quickly expanded, and an administrative bureaucracy and agricultural holdings were established, an active trade in West African, Madagascar, Indian, Indonesian, and Khoi-Khoi slaves was used to support these activities The international slave trade continued until 1808, and formally sanctioned slavery continued until the 1830s By 1822, a mixed heritage group had established itself at the Cape, and colloquially called themselves Africaanders, in reference to

both their belonging to the African continent and their Creole character This group had developed from mingling and intermarriage between the Dutch, German and French settlers, Khoi-Khoi and slaves They spoke a pidgin language influenced heavily by Dutch, but also by Malay, Portuguese, Khoi, and a range of other languages, initially it was called Cape Dutch, and later Afrikaans This group was also later referred to as Boers Following the British occupation in 1795, the 20,000 settlers, 25,754 slaves, 1700 free blacks, and as yet uncounted indigenous groups within the Cape Colony were all declared to be British subjects

A series of territorial and civil wars between black Africans, the Boers and the British continued (*ibid* 77-84) The most significant of these was the turn-of-the-century South African War, which followed the 1886 discovery of gold at the Witwatersrand in the Boer republics that had been established north of the Cape (*ibid* 200-17) While historians are divided over the most important causes of the war that the Boers declared against the British after a decade of polarisation culminated in the British rejection of the republics' demand for neutral arbitration, gold mining was certainly responsible for the unplanned explosion and sustained growth of the now century-old city of Johannesburg that developed on the Rand in the present-day province of Gauteng, the country's economic hub. Apart from approximately 27,000 soldiers, it is estimated that 20,000 black African and 28, 000 Boer civilians had died in the brutal and unhygienic conditions of British concentration camps across the surrounding Highveld by the time that the Empire could claim victory through a negotiated end to the fighting

Despite resistance, British rule of the territories had paved the way for unification, which, in turn, set the stage for the long-term consolidation of an intricate web of laws and regulations used to enshrine race discrimination (*ibid* 229-324) In 1910, the Union of South Africa was established as the first single state encompassing the present-day territory of the Republic of South Africa, still under the colonial authority of the British crown The Union was established despite the opposition of prominent black political leaders, who were wary of the consequences that unification potentially held for them Indeed, the Union constitution of 1909 set the scene for the treatment of black people for the rest of the century, together with the Native Land Act of 1913 and the Native Urban Areas Act of 1923 Sovereignty from Britain was granted to South Africa in 1934 The disruption caused by participation in the Second World War and experiences of discrimination against Afrikaner applicants by the English-dominated civil service had alienated many Afrikaners from the United Party In the watershed elections of 1948, the National Party was elected as the governing party It began implementing a programme of

white Afrikaner nationalism together with a policy of separate development of different ethnic and race groups, which eventually manifested in the system of apartheid, known globally for its brutal treatment of black people After a series of both non-violent protests and violent outbursts of resistance and repression during the decades of the apartheid regime, negotiations between the National Party and a previously banned resistance movement, the African National Congress (ANC), precipitated the country's first democratic elections in 1994 (*ibid* 321-408)

In its wake, ANC became the ruling party, Nelson Mandela became South Africa's first democratic president, and revered and respected constitution and bill of rights were enacted (*ibid* 409-12) A series of public hearings under the banner of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission provided opportunity for victims to present first-hand accounts of the brutality of apartheid, and for perpetrators in the country's armed forces to apply for amnesty from prosecution in return for full disclosure of repressive acts (*ibid*: 413-15) Criticism against the Commission include that the staff of the commission overwhelmingly excluded supporters of the former government's National Party and its ally, the Inkatha Freedom Party, and that victims who gave public evidence, were not cross-examined Yet, both locally and internationally, this process is widely hailed as having played a crucial, cathartic, and therapeutic role in the consolidation of a post-apartheid South Africa

The relatively peaceful change of state in South Africa has been criticised as an elite transition, which perpetuates poverty and unemployment and sharpens economic inequity inherited from colonialism and apartheid (*ibid* 423-34) Class poles still largely overlap with the apartheid classification of the population into race groups, although shifts have occurred, and the state has implemented a programme of social grants to support the poor

The present South African population is estimated at just under 48 million people, 80 per cent of them are black Africans, and 51 per cent, female (Statistics South Africa 2007 1) Population growth accompanies substantial in-migration and urbanisation that outpace the service and housing delivery capacity of the state, and the impact of the Aids endemic is engraved onto the social and physical South African landscape Reflecting some of its cultural variety, the country has eleven official languages The modern African languages of Zulu, Xhosa, Afrikaans, and Sesotho of the North, respectively are spoken as first language by the largest numbers of citizens, followed by English (Government Communication and Information System 2007 27) The new South African nation was labelled a 'Rainbow People' by respected religious and resistance leader Archbishop Desmond Tutu (1994 vii),

metaphorically advancing the idea that South Africans could hope for a bright and peaceful future while being true to their hybrid heritage by celebrating diversity But discriminatory domination continues to rear its head

South African Perspectives on Race

Since the first democratic elections in South African just over a decade ago, South African discourse has continued to support an essentialist understanding of race For example, in popular debates on the recent rape trial of a former vice-president, Jacob Zuma, his Zulu ethnic heritage was used to explain his behaviour (Evans and Wolmarans 2006 83) Also, many articles use the politico-ethnic designation 'Afrikaners' to generalise about Afrikaans-speaking whites (Roodt 2003 2, Schonteich and Boshoff 2003 44), while others use the phrase 'conservative whites' and the word 'Afrikaners' interchangeably (Schonteich and Boshoff 2003 4-5) The view that not only class position, but also political affiliation and race attitudes are still determined by the race and ethnic categories that were articulated by apartheid legislation is, therefore, common These generalisations seem to view various identity categories as operating in isolation or in a predetermined hierarchy, rather than in constant tension or interaction determined by the social context

One of the earliest recorded studies on perceptions of 'race' conducted in South Africa resulted in the book, *Race Attitudes in South Africa – Historical, Experimental and Psychological Studies* (MacCrone 1937) The author, I D MacCrone, was a professor of psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand who was interested in measuring respondents' 'attitude towards the native' (*ibid* 156) Befitting his discipline, MacCrone first selected 100 statements representing 'as wide a range as possible of attitudes, both favourable or unfavourable, towards the native', and then asked respondents, approximately 220 white undergraduate university students and 100 black people ('Bantu'), of whom 20 were members of the Bantu Men's Social Centre and 80 students of the then Fort Hare Native College (*ibid* 164-65), to rate the statements in eleven categories from highly favourable to highly unfavourable 'towards the native' (*ibid* 156-57) He proceeded to analyse the results in terms of 'Group Psychology and the Individual' (*ibid* 233-57) and 'Psychological Factors affecting Individual Attitudes towards the Native' (*ibid* 258-93)

MacCrone (*ibid* 293) observed that the association of black skin with dirt leads white people to react with aversion when they are physically close to black people He stated that group prejudice is a

product of primitive mental processes that lead humans always to be 'more at home in one group than in some other group' (*ibid* 254) However, he concluded that, in South Africa, where group attitudes are often linked to race prejudice, this group psychology serves the needs of individual members because it 'helps the process of adjustment to the native' by allowing all natives to be seen as representatives of a stereotyped alien group, rather than as individuals (*ibid* 257) Focusing as it did on historical and psychological explanations for attitudes towards one particular race group, MacCrone's study, while one of the most insightful of its time, analysed racism from a white perspective and ascribed it to the frontier experience (*ibid* 98-101)

Major theoretical advances were achieved when sociologists began to investigate discrimination associated with race and ethnicity from different perspectives, including that of the people discriminated against In this respect, Jacklyn Cock (1980), Harold Wolpe (1991), and Shula Marks (1994) among others, have established a solid foundation of South African literature in works that examined and exposed the systematic historical formation and entrenchment of race exclusion in three respective sectors nursing, domestic work, and education In continuity with Frantz Fanon's (1963 28-33) explicit linking of the construction of native identity with the actions and imagination of the coloniser, and Stephen Bantu Biko's (1978 19-26, 144) assertions that a black consciousness had to be forged separately from white liberal politics, an insight that was underscored by this more progressive approach to scholarship, was that 'the authentic identity of Africans was deformed and deconstructed in a manner that effectively responded to the needs of the colonizing European groups' (Abdi 1999 160) Although focusing on race, the works of Cock and Marks, in particular, also expose the gendered nature of this exploitation

In recent decades, identity theorists have come to appreciate the fact that identities are complex, and that different categories of identity constantly intersect with one another Although retaining determinist interpretations, Jonathan Jansen (2004 4) recognises the powerful interplay between skin colour and language on South African university campuses In considering language in education, Marcelle Dawson (2003 17-18) effectively illustrates how context could contribute to the temporary saliency of one type of identity over another But shifting identities are not confined to students Earlier, Tina Uys (1996 59-73) pointed to a conscious choice for saliency of race over gender among oppressed black women in Mamelodi, South Africa Therefore, the impact of context on identity construction or saliency has been illuminated in various settings

In addition, it is already understood that social-psychological experiences of particular aspects of identity impact to a large degree on the experience and articulation of another set of identities The significant intersection between race and gender identities is a manifestation of this One reason why race and sex identity impact on each other significantly may be that ideas of race and sex have been linked since the time of slavery and colonialism (Bilton *et al* 2002 187-88) For instance, race has for instance caused disregard for people's preferences in terms of both domestic arrangements and reproduction from early colonial times until very recently (Amott and Matthaei 1991 16-17) It is clear then why Teresa Amott and Julie Matthaei (*ibid* 13) should reiterate that individuals do not experience different means of subordination separately from one another

The most important way in which the intersection between race and gender has been recognised in the literature, is in the particularly desperate position experienced by black women Many sociologists (Cock 1980 251, 264, Amott and Matthaei, 1991· 13-17, Battle-Walters 2002 9, Bilton *et al*, 2002 186) have focused on the 'double burden' of racism and sexism suffered by black women In South Africa, as shown in a 1980 study by Cock (1980 252), black women were relegated to a concentration in domestic work by the synthesis of the sex and race pecking orders

The end of the academic boycott against South Africa has brought to the fore a particular irony of the country's academy 'The dynamics of race remain perhaps more unexplored in South Africa than anywhere else, and South African scholarship is only now beginning to problematise questions around racial identities, racial politics, and racial formations that would appear so central to a divided society' (Seidman 1999 433-34) Myra Goldschmidt has argued that the education sector may be the best place for these explorations to begin, since they contain 'the most influential force for ameliorating social conflict and directing social change' and because 'students are at the forefront of reaffirming or renegotiating their identities, and as they do so, they are establishing trends in the new South Africa' (2003 217)

From Double Burden to Acute Advantage

A study conducted among two groups of undergraduate students at the former Rand Afrikaans University (RAU), suggests that the theory about the intersection of race and sex could be applied to a group other than black women Although modest and not intended to be generalisable, the study contributes to a qualitative understanding of identity construction

processes at the intersection between different identity categories It suggests that in addition to a double burden experienced by black women in particular circumstances, such as when they earn lower wages because they are both black and women (Battle-Walters 2002 9), others may experience acute advantage based on the intersection of identity categories

As the major focus of a questionnaire, respondents had been asked to rate their agreement with a statement that a series of quotes from contemporary mainstream newspapers in the Gauteng province of South Africa were racist The quotes were selected to allow useful differentiation between race groups, race labels, references to contentious political groups generally associated with particular race groups, and references to cultural practices associated with particular race or ethnic groups

A total of 269 completed questionnaires were returned The sample represents approximately 2 62 per cent of the population of undergraduate contact students registered at the institution in 2001 Almost 60 per cent of the sample consisted of women, while just over 40 per cent of respondents were men All respondents were studying a subject at first-year level Just over 60 per cent of respondents were sociology students while just under 40 per cent were mathematics students Slightly more than 60 per cent of the students self-selected their population category as being white, and the remaining students selected black, coloured, or Indian as their population category A t-test and a test of between subject effects were used in conjunction with one another because the statistical significance of a difference between two groups does not establish the size of the effect of the variable in question (Rosenthal, Rosnow and Rubin 2000 4-5) The t-test shows whether the variable is associated with the experience of racism, while the test of between subject-effect measures the importance of the association

A footnote to the existing understanding that context influences the saliency of respective components of complex identity emerges from the Johannesburg study This addition is that gender could sometimes be more strongly associated with race attitudes and experiences than race identity itself In the first round of tests, respondents' sex was the demographic characteristic most strongly associated with their experience of racism Race was significant, but its effect was small In line with Dawson's (2003 17-18) description of the multiple identities of learners in common contexts, the hypothesis had been that the demographic factor most strongly associated with a respondent's experience of racism would be race, and not sex Therefore, this result was surprising More importantly, the study shows that the intersection of race and gender

could have an acute effect at the other end of the spectrum from black women, since in this study white men were set apart from all others by differences in attitude

Definitions of the terms 'race' and 'racism' have led to emotive debate Polarisation occurs not only on the basis of contested ownership, borders and rights, but also on the basis of conflicting definitions of race and racism Yet, in the RAU study, an almost complete lack of consciousness of race seemed to be prevalent in one group of respondents The final round of testing found that, while white men differed significantly from the other three groups, there was no significant difference among the remaining three groups Neither the male sex nor the white race identity of respondents could, therefore, be interpreted as the most important demographic factor setting them apart from other respondents with respect to their experiences of racism Their sex and race were important in conjunction with one another White men were less likely to experience quotes as racist than black men, black women, and white women, among whom this test found no hierarchy of likelihood to experience a quote as racist

In this sample of respondents, the life experiences of women respondents seemed to have a greater effect in sensitising respondents to discrimination than the life experiences of black people as a group But the intersection of race and sex had the greatest effect on those who occupy a position of strength white men The life experiences of black men, white women, and black women had not sensitised them to racism in any particular order The life experiences of white men in this sample, however, had apparently failed to sensitise them to racism [1]

The question is how these attitudinal differences may be explained within a social science paradigm that rejects race and sex as innate qualities? The popular or mainstream media often express the view that white men are deprived of opportunity by employment equity or affirmative action policies Could such marginalisation be responsible for differences in attitudes?

In the light of recent labour market and census figures, however. the claim that white men are disadvantaged by employment equity or affirmative action policies must be rejected A 2002 overview (Woolard 2002 2-3) of inequality confirms that most black South Africans are still poor, while most white people still have better access to higher education and to gainful employment In an analysis of trends in labour-market discrimination after apartheid, Sandrine Rospabé also found only 'a slight decrease in the racial gap in labour participation between 1993 and 1999' (2002 10) She attributes this marginal variation to 'both a decrease in the White employment rate from 95 5 per cent to 93 5 per

cent and an increase in the African employment rate from 61 5 per cent to 62 7 per cent' (*ibid*) and to the small number of newly created jobs, from which, she says Africans have benefited more than others This corresponds closely to the 2001 census figures (Statistics South Africa 2002 55)

In comparing its own findings with that of the September 2001 Labour Force Survey, the census found that, on average, at a rate of between 6 0 and 6 3 per cent, white people have the lowest unemployment rate, while black people (excluding coloured and Indian citizens) have the highest unemployment rate by far at between 35 0 and 50 2 per cent In all of these population groups, women have a higher unemployment rate than men Taken in combination, these studies indicate that white males still have better prospects than all other groups in the South African labour market These figures show that white South African men are set apart from all others not by marginalisation, but instead, by their extraordinary position of privilege [2]

In attempting to explain the vast differences of attitude between the white men in this study and all other respondents, conclusions other than marginalisation must, therefore, be considered Could the false perception that white men are disadvantaged by affirmative policies, contribute to reactionary attitudes? If this is so, racist attitudes may be moderated by correcting perceptions on the position that white men hold in South Africa

The RAU study sought to establish how the young, educated, South African respondents conceptualise racism and determine whether demographic characteristics such as race and sex are linked to their understanding Because it was of a limited scope, the findings do not provide a generalisable overview of views on racism It can only be stated that the mention of race category is not sufficient to alert this group to racism, and that racism needs to be blatant or explicit to be recognised by them The findings show a severe lack of sophistication among the respondents in the articulation of their thoughts on the topic of racism [3] If these findings apply to a broader population, public attempts should be made to encourage greater understanding of how race and gender operate in society, not only when discrimination is blatant, but especially when it is subtle or structural

The evidence shows a particular lack of sensitivity to a discourse of discrimination among white men This sets them apart from all others, which supports the findings of workplace studies that have found that white men remain in an exceptionally privileged position, yet unaware of the added challenges that their own systematic advancement presents to the members of all other demographic groups Indeed, John P Fernandez

'established that the need of minorities and women for special training to assist them in being effective managers is more questionable than is the need of white men' (1981 286-87) He does, however, suggest that training could also empower women and black people with a better understanding of the ways in which past discriminatory treatment affects their personal development, with a better means of dealing with prejudice, and with their professional development (*ibid* 288-89) Nevertheless, the recommendation for attempts to increase awareness and sensitivity is acutely important for white men How may anti-racists build on this knowledge?

Weighing Restorative Efforts

Some transformative scholars respond to racism by implicitly preferring the obliteration of cultural identity (see Lentin 2005 379, 396) There are two substantial flawed logics in this argument First, in a perspective where context contributes to identity construction, skin colour is no more natural or embodied than quality of vision or the need to wear spectacles, first language is not inherently more prone to mobilisation than hair colour, and national belonging is no less acquired than educational level Alternative differences between people will always be available for mobilisation And second, these authors generally miss the fact that a majority of people would have to convert to their preferred identity in order for their too-culturally-imbued identities to be obliterated Marking one identity, such as English-speaking, agnostic as preferable to any other for being more neutral, simply sets new criteria for a hierarchy of human beings

The interpretations suggested here, however, avoid the deterministic quality of such analyses, since they allow remedies other than the annihilation of identity Instead of obliterating difference, public education could denaturalise the association between identity and material position One attempted remedy for a racist imagination of South African history was the country's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)

TRC constituted one of the first South African attempts to publicly institute a restorative agenda, rather than merely outlawing discrimination or establishing the principle of universal or fundamental human rights The latter did occur prior to the constitution of TRC, notably in the Electoral Act of 1993 (Republic of South Africa 1993b 174), which prohibited discrimination based on race with respect to elections, in the negotiated interim constitution that came into effect on 27 April 1994 that established a common citizenship and fundamental rights and freedoms for people of all races (Republic of South Africa 1993a 1-3),

and in the December 1994 act that established the South African Human Rights Commission, intended to promote the observance, protection and popular awareness of 'fundamental rights' (Republic of South Africa 1995a 10)

The TRC process was intended to launch modes of redress corresponding to three kinds of discrimination mentioned by Jordi Borja and Manuel Castells (1997 76-80) economic, institutional, and cultural The first attempt at *cultural redress* would be made by providing victims with a platform to voice their experiences, aimed at restoring their dignity and beginning to write an alternative history to the official one provided in school text books of the previous dispensation (Republic of South Africa 1995b 55) The first steps towards *institutional redress* would be taken by formally recognising the experiences of South Africans who suffered under apartheid, by promoting a culture of mutual tolerance and respect for human rights, and encouraging adherence to this culture by deciding who could be prosecuted in a court of law (*ibid* 54-56) The first steps towards *economic redress* would be taken based on the Commission's findings, and would include payment to individual victims as well as other forms of reparation recommended by the Commission (*ibid* 55, 77) This article cannot go into an examination of the attainment or otherwise of these various agendas, numerous research projects have been dedicated to these questions

Unexpected Obstacles

Among the hearings of TRC were those held from 15 to 17 September 1997 that explored the role of different media organisations under apartheid along with attempts by the state to control the media The media hearings informed the Commission's findings on the media, which included that the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) actively co-operated with and served the former government and its security forces, that the Afrikaans language media directly supported apartheid and the activities of the security forces, and that the mainstream English media often chose to appease the state (TRC nd 140-47) 'With the notable exception of certain individuals, the mainstream newspapers and the SABC failed to report adequately on gross human rights violations In so doing, they helped sustain and prolong the existence of apartheid' the Commission concluded (*ibid* 148) In addition, it found that the newspaper industry's employment practices generally mirrored the race and gender discrimination that was evident in broader South Africa (*ibid* 146)

The hearings were not void of controversy First, the Black Editors' Forum lodged objections to the involvement of the Freedom of Expression Institute, which it believed represented particular interests within the media fraternity (Skjerdal 2000 178) TRC then proceeded to handle the investigation by inviting submissions and conducting the hearings without outside assistance This approach did not preclude controversy either After the process, Terje Skjerdal argued that the picture painted by the hearings underscored a simplistic division of the South African print media into the English liberal, the Afrikaans and the alternative press respectively Black journalists generally made little distinction between the mainstream English and Afrikaans press, since both were guilty of 'colluding with apartheid' (2000 180) Skjerdal (*ibid* 178-85) saw a much more nuanced picture, in which the critique of the old English liberal press by black journalists and other media workers was not insignificant, but nor so the failure of journalists and members of management in various media stables to agree either on whether to make submissions or on the appropriate content of such submissions This polarisation within supposedly homogenous groups is also emphasised by Arnold De Beer and Johan Fouché (2000 192-195) While their focus is on divisions between those in the Afrikaans stable during the TRC process, they also highlight the interesting aftermath of the debate, characterised by significant and introspective coverage of the TRC findings on the media in the Afrikaans press, echoed only by a deafening silence in the English press (*ibid* 202)

The example of TRC illustrates how easily exterior events may detract from the potentially healing and unifying effects such a process In addition to this, the South African government's failure to deliver on promises of monetary reparations to apartheid victims that were recommended by TRC, diminishes the possibility of a lasting public pride in the process Where the TRC process began to address identity rifts and disparities in South African society, the study quoted here suggests that long-term results in this arena can only be achieved by a strong and sustained effort to address poverty and bring the extreme poles of privilege closer together as well

Conclusion

This argument here echoes that of Paul Gilroy (2001) with respect to the European context, that the history must be rewritten through a more credible anti-racist movement, one which not only systematically 'de-natures' race, but also critically confronts 'the alienated modern sociality that drowns out the cries of those who suffer' (*ibid* 14) This article has

shown how a study conducted among university students on a South African campus may contribute to our understanding of the intensified effect of race and gender when they operate in tandem This was done by illustrating how the theory may be applied at the opposite end of the spectrum from the double burden experienced by many black women, to acute advantage for certain white men In a paradigm where race and sex are rejected as innate qualities, this was a credible explanation for the insensitivity of white male respondents to discrimination Just as the double burden of black womanhood does not have the demonstrated effect in the case of all black women, so too, not all white men are expected to be at the top of the pile Such a deterministic interpretation of the interaction between race and sex would not be palatable within a non-essentialist paradigm that views identity as socially constructed and contextually negotiated It has been shown, however, that an unmatched position of privilege experienced by white men may reinforce both individual and institutional racism By extension, just as the identities of black and colonised people have been linked directly to the actions and imaginations of oppressors and colonisers, the separate identity of privileged white men may be seen to be reshaped and reinforced and by sustained inequity

This has important implications for anti-racist strategies Those strategies that focus on prejudice, stereotyping and mental processes have little chance of success until material disparities are also addressed Although anti-racist strategies need to re-imagine the world, this is not sufficient, and they must also address inequity While a South African case has been used to further the argument here, it is suggested that this interpretation may have implications wherever identity and material rifts overlap

Notes

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1 It should be noted that many of the undergraduate respondents would not have entered the labour market at the time of completing the survey questionnaire
2 Despite an inverse population composition with respect to race, this situation is parallel to that of the United States of America Even as white men there complained of 'reverse discrimination' due to affirmative action in the early 1980s, Fernandez (1981 295) found that they had not sacrificed power, but had remained favoured over other groups There, corporations were not sufficiently deterred by the possible consequences of contravention to provide women and black people with the same opportunities as white men The combination of race and sex discrimination in the

labour market has 'meant that, in general, only white men were able to earn a "family wage" adequate to support oneself and a family' (Amott and Matthaei 1991 26) In 1991, Hudson (1991 98) was able to confirm that, on the whole, the system consistently gave white men better chances than women and black people She identified two types of employment discrimination that reinforced and perpetuated historical disparities after, and despite, policy attempts to do the opposite These were 'organizational process discrimination, where recruitment favours those who get there first, and territorial discrimination, where blacks and women are allowed to use their informal job contacts almost exclusively in black school districts or (for white women) small, less sought-after school districts' (*ibid* 96) So unrewarded by the labour market have black men's investment in education been, that Parcel and Mueller (1983 270) come to the conclusion that an emphasis on education may be misplaced for black people White men could however expect to benefit from effort such as obtaining qualifications It is important to note that this finding chronologically follows a concerted affirmative action programme and, in some cases, the implementation of quota systems in the United States of America In this context, arguments of reverse discrimination could not hold water

3 The largest group of articulate reasons for agreeing that a quote was racist included that a particular quote was an assumption, that it was prejudicial, that it generalised or stereotyped, that it treated different races in different ways, that it blamed a particular race group for something, or that it attached a negative connotation to a race group In other words, students were most likely to identify racism when blatantly negative judgments were made Descriptions of quotes as unsympathetic, too direct, containing offensive language, displaying hate or disrespect, or unbefitting to the new South Africa, fell into the next group By implication, these students would be more l kely to excuse racism if politically correct language were employed while it was being perpetrated

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DISCUSSION

On M.N. Srinivas and Indian Sociology

Violation of the Norms of Academic Discourse*

A. M. Shah

T.K. Oommen's Srinivas Memorial Lecture, 'Disjunctions between Field, Method and Concept An Appraisal of M N Srinivas', published in *Sociological Bulletin* (57 [1], January-April 2008 60-81) has appalled many sociologists It has words, phrases, and sentences that end sarcastically with an exclamation mark, showing discourtesy to Srinivas after his death, and that too in a lecture in his memory Even more shocking is Oommen's violation of the norms of academic discourse there are statements that reveal an ignorance of facts about Srinivas as well as the history of sociology in India and abroad, selective quotes from a book or paper that ignore inconvenient parts even within a paragraph, contradictions within and between paragraphs, and barely concealed attempts to set up targets for subsequent attack

Oommen also overlooks the simple fact that every creative scholar goes through a process of intellectual evolution that results in a modification of his ideas over time Srinivas had a long scholarly career, and remained mentally alert till the end, responding to new data and ideas He wrote, 'I am by no means a systematic thinker, let alone a system-builder All my formulations are *ad hoc* and tentative, and to be abandoned when more satisfactory formulations are available, or the appearance of new data renders them useless' (1978 131) While Oommen accepts that Srinivas was willing to discard the concept of sanskritisation if it was found to be useless (p 77),[1] there is neither any

recognition of Srinivas' intellectual humility nor sensitivity to changes in his ideas over time For the most part, his references are limited to Srinivas's earlier work [2]

I

Oommen prefaces his article with comments on Srinivas's three teachers G S Ghurye in Bombay, and A R Radcliffe-Brown and E E Evans-Pritchard in Oxford. About Ghurye he writes, 'Ghurye was sent to England by the Bombay University in 1920 to do a PhD in sociology so that he could start the Department of Sociology on his return after training' (p 78, n 1) In fact, this Department was started in 1919 with Patrick Geddes as Professor and Head of the Department, and Ghurye succeeded him as Reader and Head in 1924 (Ghurye 1973 56-59, Munshi 2007 172, Upadhya 2007 207) It is surprising that a senior professor of sociology like Oommen is ignorant of when and how the first university department for his subject was set up

Bombay University had awarded Ghurye a scholarship for doing PhD in sociology at the London School of Economics He worked there for some time with L T Hobhouse, but migrated to Cambridge to work for PhD in anthropology with W H R Rivers Oommen states that Ghurye 'defected' to anthropology 'without seeking any prior approval from the Bombay University', and was 'punished' for this 'unauthorised shift' and 'aberrant' behaviour (p 78, n 1) It is a matter of regret that Oommen uses such derogatory language for one of the founding fathers of our discipline

While it is not possible to discuss the administrative aspects of this episode without sufficient information, we must discuss its academic aspects since Ghurye's decision to study anthropology with Rivers has had long lasting implications for sociology in India Let us first place Ghurye in the intellectual environment of Bombay during 1911-20, the period of his studentship [3] In the absence of any systematic study of this environment, we have to depend on bits and pieces of information (1) Indology studied by Ghurye in Bombay was deeply influenced by ethnology, particularly by evolutionism and diffusionism of the 19th and early 20th century (see Shah 1959) (2) Patrick Geddes took a broad view of sociology, including anthropology within it For example, his MA students were regularly taken on field trips to villages and other communities in the north of Bombay and beyond under the supervision of S H Pherwani, an assistant professor Geddes argued that 'he was training his students in "pure" sociology for which fieldwork was absolutely essential' (Munshi 2007 174, see Shah 1972) (3) Baroda

College, affiliated to Bombay University, published the *Indian Journal of Sociology* in 1920-21 (Shah 1972, 1998) It conceived of sociology as including social philosophy, Indology, anthropology, and social work Its issues included a review of Rivers's *Kinship and Social Organisation* (1914), *Man in India* (1920), the anthropological journal, and an essay on kinship terms in Gujarat inspired by Rivers's book

All available information indicates that the intellectual environment during Ghurye's studentship in Bombay conceived of sociology as including anthropology He seems to have carried this conception to England It follows, therefore, that he did nothing unusual when he shifted from sociology to anthropology Secondly, British universities, unlike their Indian counterparts, were flexible about migration between disciplines and universities, especially at the doctoral level Thirdly, since Ghurye wanted to work on ethnological issues, particularly in the context of India, Rivers was a more suitable supervisor than Hobhouse Rivers, a distinguished ethnologist, knew India through his work on the Todas and in other ways Ghurye must have known his work as a student in Bombay From the academic point of view, therefore, there was nothing abnormal about Ghurye's shift to anthropology It certainly does not warrant deprecation of the kind we witness in Oommen's article We may add N A Thoothi, the second student Bombay University sent to England for training in sociology a year after Ghurye, and appointed as reader in 1925, developed an eclectic approach inclusive of anthropology during his doctoral work in Oxford [4]

Oommen comments on Ghurye's work after his return to India 'While Ghurye is widely acknowledged as one of the founding fathers of Indian sociology, his ambivalence to sociology and affinity to anthropology is not so well known Ghurye has substantially contributed to the "anthropologisation" of Indian sociology' (p 60) Since this comment presumes a distinction between sociology and anthropology, we must now turn to it

Oommen states 'The "fields" of sociology and social anthropology were *clearly* distinguished in Europe, by common consent sociology was the study of one's own society which was reckoned as "industrial", "modern" and "advanced" In contrast, the task of social anthropology was to study "primitive" societies' (p 61, emphasis added) With specific reference to Britain, he adds 'For social anthropologists in Britain the field was primitive societies and the method they prescribed was participant observation' (*ibid*) He refers here to Radcliffe-Brown's letter to the editor of *American Anthropologist* (1952a) regarding the history of British social anthropology (p 60) Radcliffe-Brown notes that James Frazer was the first Professor of Social Anthropology appointed in

Britain in 1906 He goes on to observe that, in a meeting of teachers from Oxford, Cambridge, and London held subsequently, 'the comparative study of the institutions of primitive societies was accepted as the task of social anthropology, and this name was preferred to sociology' While quoting this sentence, Oommen conveniently ignores the next two 'Frazer, in 1906, had already defined *social anthropology as the branch of sociology* that deals with primitive peoples Westermarck held the position of Professor of Sociology, though his work was really in the field of social anthropology' (*ibid*, emphasis added) Indeed, sociology and social anthropology were not so *clearly* set apart in Britain the latter was considered a branch of the former since the name was first used in 1906

British social anthropology began to change after the end of World War I, following an increased concern with the study of 'advanced' societies For example, Radcliffe-Brown's student John Embree studied a village in Japan Srinivas, in a letter to Ghurye written soon after he arrived in Oxford in 1945, stated that Embree's thesis (published in 1946) 'is supposed to be one of the new developments in anthropology' (Ghurye 1973 115-16, Shah *et al* 1996 204) Similarly, Bronislaw Malinowski's student Fei Hsiao-Tung studied a village in China (1939), and Raymond Firth's student A Aiyappan studied the Iravas of Kerala (1944) Srinivas was, thus, one of the anthropology students in Britain who studied 'advanced' societies in Asia Significantly, Fei, Aiyappan and Srinivas studied their own societies Evans-Pritchard, Srinivas's second teacher in Oxford, had himself studied the Sanusi of Cyrenaica, an Islamic group in North Africa (1949) He also created the post of Lecturer in Indian Sociology in his Institute of Social Anthropology, and appointed Srinivas to it That the journey of British (as well as American and European) social anthropology towards the study of 'advanced' societies, including their own, picked up even greater momentum after World War II, is well known

In sum, Oommen's assertion that sociology and social anthropology were *clearly* distinguished in Britain at the time of Srinivas' visit has no basis in fact Nor was there enough clarity on this at the time of Ghurye's and Thoothi's visit

We can now return to Oommen's contention that Ghurye was partial to anthropology to the neglect of sociology Ghurye, as we have already noted, inherited the notion then prevalent in Bombay that sociology subsumed anthropology, which was indeed the case in Britain when he visited He continued with this tradition upon his return to Bombay His scholarly work was prolific and wide ranging, encompassing Indological, anthropological, and sociological themes, based on varied methods So

wide was his canvas that Devadas Pillai was inspired to compile a dictionary on it (1997, see Ghurye's bibliography in this dictionary, pp 387-91, and a classification of his books in Upadhya 2007 219) Ghurye's students' work too was prolific and wide ranging with regard to both subject and method of research (see the list of their theses, eighty in all, and their classification, in Pillai's dictionary, pp 395-400) [5] All this flies in the face of Oommen's contention that Ghurye's department was oriented towards anthropology and Indology (pp 60-61, 65)

Ghurye's encompassing approach was also reflected in the BA and MA syllabi My own experience is illustrative When Srinivas joined Baroda University in 1951 as the first professor and head, the sociology department had to follow the Bombay University syllabi As a BA student in 1951, I had, therefore, to study cultural anthropology as a subsidiary subject My MA course too included four papers of the Bombay syllabus General Sociology, Indian Sociology, Social Biology, and Social Psychology [6] The main textbooks foi General Sociology, adopted from the Bombay syllabus, were *Society* by R M MacIver and C H Page (1950), the American sociologists, and *Sociology* by Morris Ginsberg (1934), Hobhouse's successor in London Srinivas added a third book, *Structure and Function in Primitive Society* by Radcliffe-Brown (1952b) Ghurye used to describe MacIver and Page's *Society* as the best textbook on the subject (1952 v)

Ghurye used his influence to set up departments of sociology – and not anthropology – in new universities, especially in western India So did many of his influential students No university in Gujarat set up an anthropology department Even Gujarat Vidyapeeth, the sole exception, had to rename its social anthropology department as the department of sociology and social anthropology Nor did any university in Maharashtra set up an anthropology department In Poona (now Pune), once again the sole exception, the combined department of sociology and anthropology was split into two Ghurye created a post for anthropology within his sociology department, but even this was not acceptable to other departments in Gujarat and Maharashtra The only thing that worked was teaching and research in social anthropology under the umbrella of sociology

It should be evident by now that there is no basis at all to Oommen's allegation that Ghurye was partial to anthiopology at the expense of sociology His vision was to develop both subjects under the umbrella of the former, and he had the determination to pursue this vision His colleague Thoothi strengthened this vision, despite his differences with Ghurye on other matters

II

Oommen has devoted a large part of his article to what he calls disjunction between field and method in Srinivas's work We must first note that Srinivas's writing on method was quite substantial He edited Radcliffe-Brown's *Method in Social Anthropology* (1958), and with me and Ramaswamy, *The Fieldworker and the Field* (1979) There are eight essays on method in his *Collected Essays* (2002a), and portions, large and small, on method in his other books and papers

Oommen states, 'For social anthropologists in Britain the field was primitive societies and the method they prescribed to study them was participant observation' (p 61), and this method 'emerged in the context of European anthropologists studying colonies' (p 68) However, this is only one facet of the history of the method The other facet is its relation with structural-functionalism There was increasing dissatisfaction among anthropologists during the first few decades of the 20th century with the evolutionism and diffusionism of the 19th century that saw the elements of culture in isolation from each other These theories were applied to both primitive and civilised societies, including India (see Shah 1959), and Srinivas expressed the same kind of dissatisfaction about his work under Ghurye (1973) Functionalism, on the other hand, required the anthropologist to see the elements of culture in relation to each other, and the method of fieldwork or participant-observation – the two are not distinguished – greatly helped in this Oommen ignores this theoretical aspect of the history of the method

Oommen is wrong in assuming that the study of primitive societies is the exclusive concern of social anthropology. Surely, Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx, and Max Weber, the founders of sociology, were concerned with primitive societies How can one forget that Durkheim's study of religion was based on available accounts of Australian aborigines? He is equally off the point in arguing that the fieldwork method was the exclusive preserve of social anthropologists Who can forget *Street Corner Society*, W F Whyte's classic study of a Boston slum (1943)?

Oommen states, 'Social anthropology emerged in the colonial context, its field was the study of the other' (p 70) Actually, when social anthropology emerged in the early decades of the 20th century in Britain, there was little concern with the problem of the other It is a much later development After World War II, since western anthropologists were pursuing the study of advanced societies such as China, Japan, and India, and primitive societies were also beginning to develop, they realised that the definition of anthropology as the study of primitive societies was meaningless In their search for a new identity, they hit

upon the idea of the other as the quintessence of anthropology But even this definition began to lose meaning due to three simultaneous developments one, anthropologists belonging to the western world began to study their own societies, two, many non-western anthropologists studied segments of their own societies, and three, many western 'sociologists' also studied segments of their own societies by the field-work method Thus, both anthropologists and sociologists tried to grapple with the problem of the other within their own societies Despite these fairly well established developments, Oommen comments in intemperate language the study of other cultures as a 'unique selling point of social anthropology' is a 'dispensable idea' (p 71) This 'unique selling point' is his own imagination and he has conjured it up merely to launch a broadside against social anthropology

One of the themes of Oommen's article is Srinivas's use of participant observation for the study of one's own society (p 61), a combination that he concedes as an 'innovative' and 'creative leap' Being well aware of the work of his predecessors and peers in India and abroad, Srinivas himself never made such a claim Oommen then proceeds to lift a sentence out of context to argue that Srinivas's understanding of 'one's own society' was flawed Srinivas wrote 'any Indian working in any part of India or with any group, is working in his own society, defining the society in purely political terms' (2002 577) Culture, to Srinivas, was a different matter He made this clear in the very next sentence 'It would be difficult to define society in terms of culture, for in that sense South Asia might be regarded a single culture-area In fact, the area could even be wider' Oommen takes on Srinivas for 'conflating' polity and society, citing instances of linguistic and ethnic groups that span India and parts of South Asia He does this by selectively picking on the first sentence in the above quote, but conveniently ignoring what follows immediately after This is yet another instance of Oommen conjuring up a target to launch a tirade

Oommen also has problems with Srinivas's ideas on the typicality of the field His critique is based on statements lifted from three different sources In his essay on Rampura in *India's Villages* (1955), Srinivas advocated 'the field study of *typical villages* in different linguistic areas in our country' (*ibid* 21, emphasis added) He wrote a quarter century later (1979 20) that he chose Rampura because 'the time at my disposal was so short that I had to start my work at the earliest possible opportunity, and Rampura was the only village where I could get a place to stay in ' In the same year Srinivas wrote in the Introduction to *The Fieldworker and the Field* (Srinivas *et al* 1979 7) 'The few who do take the trouble of searching for the "typical" field discover that there is

no such thing ' On the basis of these three statements Oommen accuses Srinivas of 'ambivalence' and 'abandoning a well-established principle' about typicality of the unit of research 'he "selected" Rampura in 1948 for sheer pragmatic reasons, and yet in 1955 he recommended the study of typical villages from each of the linguistic regions, but in 1979 he asserts that typicality of village is a mirage!' (pp 63-64)

There are two problems with Oommen's assessment (i) He does not seem to have seen Srinivas's clarification in his introduction to *India's Villages* (1955 1) that '[these] essays are tentative in the extreme', repeated again in his 'A Note to the Second Edition' (1960) He foresaw that he might revise his ideas (ii) Srinivas, Ramaswamy, and I who edited *The Fieldworker and the Field* wrote the introduction, and we made the observation about the typicality of the field not merely on the basis of our own experience, but on that of twelve other contributors to the volume For Srinivas himself this represented a conscious shift of view, not a quixotic violation of a so-called principle

On research methodology, Oommen's position is that 'participant observation is not a necessary condition for producing brilliant results' He drums up support for this claim by contrasting the success of Srinivas's Coorg book based on irregular visits to the field with Rampura papers based on intensive fieldwork The only problem with all this is that no one has claimed that participant observation is a necessary condition for brilliance, least of all Srinivas He was not blind to the limitations of the fieldwork method In fact, he stated in his first discussion of the method as early as in 1952 'I hope I will not be regarded as placing a "mystical" value on the anthropologist conducting intensive fieldwork' (2002 460) Yet, Oommen advises us to 'demystify' participant observation more than fifty-five years after Srinivas had done precisely that (pp 71, 78) And in continuation of his penchant for target practice, he accuses Srinivas of 'method-monism' even as he contradicts himself by quoting Srinivas's advocacy of 'methodological catholicity' Srinivas not only wrote about catholicity but also encouraged his students and colleagues to use methods other than fieldwork

Oommen talks about 'field-fundamentalism' versus 'text-extremism' as if Srinivas was an advocate of the former and did not study texts (pp 62, 66) However, Srinivas's Coorg book includes an English translation of the entire text of *Kaveri Mahatmya*, a part of *Skanda Purana*, and its analysis, and references to a number of other texts A more fundamental point is the concept of Sanskritic Hinduism, the foundation of the concept of sanskritisation, could not have been formulated and used

without adequate knowledge of Sanskrit texts Srinivas also encouraged several students, like me and Veena Das, to study texts [7]

Oommen misses one fundamental point Srinivas's goal was to develop an empirical science of society Even though he preferred the fieldwork method, he understood the need for catholicity of methods to achieve this goal I P Desai, a long time friend and colleague of Srinivas, but an advocate of the survey method, said, 'there is a tendency in Srinivas's thinking to emphasize the empirical, so much so that it might lead to the trend of his becoming an empiricist – some might add if he is not already one' (1996 100)

Oommen finds 'a serious disjunction between "field" and "method"' (pp 64, 70) in Srinivas's work Srinivas, he says, used participant observation in Rampura even though it was his own society, while he did not use it in Coorg even though it was the 'other' Additionally, he considers Coorg 'a tribal society that was moving in the direction of Hinduisation when Srinivas was studying it' This assertion is based on a careless reading of Srinivas's work The Coorgs might have been a 'tribe' in some distant past, but not when Srinivas studied them He states repeatedly that they considered themselves Hindus by virtue of being Kshatriyas And the book itself is known around the world as a study of Hinduism among the Coorgs and other Hindu castes There is no disjunction between field and method here In any case, the idea that participant observation is only suited for studying the 'other' has been discredited since long

Oommen is unimpressed by Srinivas's efforts to spread the fieldwork method beyond village, caste, and tribe, a range that is well depicted by *The Fieldworker and the Field* (Srinivas *et al* 1979) His response to this eclectic spread of the method is to accuse Srinivas of 'method-monism' Oommen is once again off the mark Throughout his stint in Baroda and Delhi, Srinivas popularised the subject with the utmost passion He encouraged his students to branch into new and varied areas which had until then been the preserve of economists, political scientists and historians He was convinced that the fieldwork method helped vastly in developing the sociological imagination His efforts paid off, as can be judged from the work of his colleagues and students Oommen might not like it, but the results speak for themselves [8]

Oommen finds fault with Srinivas's view that 'the study of a village or a small town or a caste provides a strategic point of entry for the study of Indian society and culture as a whole' (1972 158) For Oommen, this implies a 'quantum leap from the village to the country' and 'mistaking the part for the whole' (p 63) Actually, it is neither, but a first step towards understanding the whole More significantly, Srinivas himself

stresses in the same paragraph, not once but twice, on the need for 'knowledge of regional history and culture' As usual, Oommen chooses to ignore this

III

Section II of Oommen's article deals with the relationship between 'field and method on the one hand, and concept formation, on the other' (p 70) He focuses attention on the concept of sanskritisation,[9] beginning with its origin in Srinivas's MA thesis of 1938, published in 1942 as *Marriage and Family in Mysore* Srinivas stated (1966 149-50) that his model of sanskritisation in 1942 was derived from Brahmins and Lingayats because there were no Kshatriyas and Vaishyas in Mysore Oommen's response to this is that Srinivas did not follow 'the imperative need for selecting representative unit/s from the field', and that 'if the Mysore region did not have Kshatriya and Vaishya groups other regions could have been selected for observation' (pp. 70-72) This is irresponsible criticism on a number of counts Srinivas could not have retrospectively addressed the limitations of an MA thesis that he realised many years later In any case, the subject of his dissertation was marriage and family Sanskritisation, which was only a serendipitous offshoot, was not even given that appellation in this work Surely, an MA student, on his first research mission, cannot be expected to know which castes provided the role model in a region, and which region is representative for a serendipitous finding that was to follow later Finally, the logistics of changing the field midway are daunting enough for even a well-established and well-endowed researcher To expect this of an MA student, who has in addition to carry along his supervisor, and a tough one like Ghurye at that, is a tall order indeed It is hard to see what purpose is served by criticising a 22-year-old Srinivas who, it must be said to his credit, re-formulated his views in the years that followed

In the short space of three pages (pp 72-75), Oommen makes a wide range of sweeping general statements about the relation of sanskritisation to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes, twice-born castes, Hindus, Sikhs, Tamils, Aryans, Dravidians, Muslims, Christians, and the rest What he wants to convey, in a nutshell, is that sanskritisation cannot play the 'cohesive role' of uniting the people of all these categories as claimed by Srinivas All of these social categories are so complex that an adequate discussion of even one of them would make this rejoinder longer than it already is I would, therefore, limit myself to two observations First, Srinivas was not so naive as to make the kind of claim Oommen attributes to him Oommen should read all of Srinivas's

writings, and in full, rather than pick on a couple of convenient sentences as he has done repeatedly Second, Srinivas pointed out several times that the process of sanskritisation has two dimensions, cultural and structural, making clear that its cultural elements are not necessarily connected with caste (1956a 90, 93, 2002c 200-20, 1967, 2002d 212, 222) The concept of Sanskritic Hinduism, the foundation of the concept of sanskritisation, is essentially a cultural concept Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, eminent linguist and historian, also considered sanskritisation, independently of Srinivas, as a cultural process (1950) Oommen has not factored this into his critique of sanskritisation Precisely because of this, his suggestion that the concept of sanskritisation should be revised in the light of Merton's concept of reference group behaviour is unlikely to provide the answers he is looking for In any case, Oommen should demonstrate the usefulness of his idea with some empirical work

IV

Section III of Oommen's article deals with what he calls methodological orientation, or the philosophy of social science For him, Durkheim's orientation is societal determinism, Marx's, economic determinism, and Weber's, methodological individualism The work of these founders of sociology is so wide-ranging that they cannot be squeezed into these two-word cubbyholes The label for Srinivas is Methodological Sanskritic Hinduism, shortened to Methodological Hinduism 'for the purpose of brevity and elegance' Oommen might have achieved some brevity, but not any elegance Indeed, he is high on rhetoric and low on substance Srinivas's work is much too diverse to admit of such a label As we saw, Srinivas himself had said that he was not a system-builder, and he certainly hated being branded with any 'ism'

Towards the end of his article, Oommen turns to Srinivas's vision of Indian unity (pp 76-77) He quotes three sentences, two from one paper 'The concept of the unity of India is essentially a religious one', and 'As the idea of the unity of India has its origin in the Hindu religion, non-Hindus are excluded from it' (1962 105, 107) True to style, Oommen ignores the following sentences – and a lot more – from the same paper because they do not fit in with his agenda To put the record straight and to expose Oommen's penchant for being economical with the truth, I shall reproduce them 'The idea of integrating the inhabitants of India on a religious basis is plainly out of the question The decision declaring India a secular state is a wise and far-seeing one It is hoped that in course of time people will come to appreciate the idea that members of every religion are equal as citizens' (*ibid* 108) Oommen then quotes

one more sentence from Srinivas, 'India is the sacred land not only of the Hindus but also of the Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists' (1980 2), but, as is his wont, ignores the next three sentences that would upset his prejudice 'The Muslims and Christians, too, have several sacred centres of pilgrimage in India The institution of caste cuts across diverse religious groups The declaration of India as a secular state provides one more evidence of the tolerance of diversity' (*ibid*)

Srinivas wrote a great deal on secularism, pluralism, and other values enshrined in the constitution of India (see Srinivas 2002 235, 441), but Oommen has not read them, and if he has, he has either not understood them or ignored them deliberately Based on this selective and convenient assemblage of half truths, he goes on to assert that Srinivas's vision is 'precariously proximate to that upheld by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh [as spelt out by Savarkar and Golwalkar]' (p 76) This is outrageous and mischievous calumny that must be treated with the contempt it deserves There is no point discussing it

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Oommen does have a word or two of praise for Srinivas '[He] did bring in a breath of fresh air into Indian Social Science and we should celebrate his life and works At the same time, we should not hesitate to stand on his shoulders to see far ahead' (pp 77-78) Oommen's thoughts may be laudable, but his article is replete with so much denigration, calumny, and disrespect for our intellectual ancestry that it cannot help anyone to see far ahead It is motivated propaganda that cannot serve any scholarly purpose

Notes

* I thank B S Baviskar, Lancy Lobo, P J Patel, Tulsi Patel, E A Ramaswamy, and N R Sheth for comments on the draft of this rejoinder

1 Passages from Oommen's article are cited by page numbers For Srinivas's articles reprinted in his *Collected Essays* (2002a), details of the original source are also provided

2 The publication dates of some of his references are misleading

3 Modern scholarly activities began to get organised in Bombay early in the 19th century At least four scholarly societies were established in Bombay during the first half of the century Royal Asiatic Society of Bombay, Anthropological Society of Bombay, Geographical Society of Bombay, and Literary Society of Bombay, and each published a journal Unfortunately, we have no study of these societies and their journals However, it is known that they included articles of sociological significance For example, the journal of the Literary Society published in 1823 a long essay based

on a survey of a village near Pune (Coats 1823), which was re-studied by Ghurye (1960) and Pauline Kolenda (1970) The journal of the Anthropological Society was discontinued – I do not know when – but was revived by Ghurye in 1946 (Upadhya 2007 239) and discontinued again Shyamji Krishnavarma, educated in Bombay and Oxford, edited *The Indian Sociologist* in London, Paris, and Geneva during 1905-22 (see Shah 2006), but we do not know how much influence it had in the scholarly circles in Bombay and elsewhere in India

4 Thoothi's doctoral work on the Vaishnava sects in Gujarat (1935) required him to study anthropology under J L Myres and R R Marett in Oxford

5 Pillai's classification has as many as thirty-four categories There were two theses on Muslims, one of which was by G M Mekhri, who migrated to Pakistan He came to attend a UNESCO seminar in Agra in 1959, which I also attended With tears in his eyes, he spoke affectionately about Ghurye and his department, and about how his decision to migrate to Pakistan was a mistake

6 For detailed information on syllabi in Bombay, see Upadhya (2007 220-24)

7 In this context, see Srinivas's 'Foreword' in Milton Singer's *When a Great Tradition Modernizes* (1972)

8 The readers should see the lists of research students at the sociology departments in Baroda and Delhi Universities, and their publications

9 The size of literature on sanskritisation is large (see Charsley 1996, Shah 2005)

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Hinduism and Caste

M.V. Nadkarni

I went through with great interest T K Oommen's M N Srinivas Memorial Lecture as published in the *Sociological Bulletin* (57 [1], January-April 2008 60-81) I enjoyed reading it in spite of certain serious differences I have with his stand, which I have indicated below

My main point is about Oommen's contention that the norms and values of Hinduism, particularly as in the Hindu texts, sanction the caste system (p 66) His emphasis is on the texts, and not so much on actual practice, because in the Indian subcontinent at least, in all religious societies the caste system prevails Therefore, according to him, we should rather see which religion's texts endorse the caste system Then he points out that religions other than Hinduism have opposed the caste system, as it is not consistent with the norms and values of their texts, which, according to him, is not the case with Hinduism To be fair to him, he is not the only one to hold such a view, this myth, this misunderstanding, is quite widespread

That is why I devoted a few years of my life after superannuation to verify this on my own and my findings were first published in the form of an article (Nadkarni 2003) A more detailed version came out as Chapter 2 in my book (Nadkarni 2008/2006) Since I have documented my stand in great detail in both of these publications, I shall be brief here

A main source of confusion lies in the fact that some *smriti* texts, particularly *Manusmriti*, endorsed the caste system, which came to regulate the day to day life in the Hindu society *Shruti* texts (Vedas and Upanishads), however, have explicitly opposed the caste system A fact has been conveniently ignored by many that *smritis* themselves have declared that where there is a conflict between the *smriti* and *shruti*, the latter shall prevail Caste is obviously an issue where there is such a conflict, therefore, the stand of the *smritis* on this point cannot be considered as valid *Smritis* have never been regarded as sacred texts at any time Though they had acquired the status of law books, it was clear that they were valid only to the extent that they were consistent with the teachings of the texts regarded as sacred

Some of the poems from sacred texts were of course misinterpreted as supporting caste system A prominent example of this is *Purusha Sukta* from *Rigveda* It is essentially a metaphor taking the society to be an organic whole, of which the four *varnas* are intrinsic parts There is nothing to indicate that they ought to be castes or *jatis*, understood as determined by birth The reference is only to division of labour, with each *varna* corresponding to the body of the primeval *Purusha* according to function Since the Vaishyas and Shudras support the society through their economic and productive work, they were depicted as coming out of the thighs and feet respectively It does not mean that the work is low in status Similarly, as the work of Kshatriyas involved arms, they were depicted as coming out of the arms of the *Purusha* Since the work of Brahmins consisted of reciting *mantras* and preserving the *Vedas* through oral transmission, they were depicted as coming out of the mouth of *Purusha* If the intention was to show Brahmins as most superior, they would have been depicted as coming out of the head of the *Purusha* It was seen perhaps by the Vedic sage that Brahmin priests used mostly their mouth rather than head while reciting the *mantras*!

A key quotation from the *Bhagavadgita* (*Gita*) (13th verse in Ch 4) has also been similarly misunderstood, though it clearly says that the four *varnas* were created by god on the basis of character and occupation K M Panikkar (1961 40-41) considers this verse to be a devastating attack on caste based on birth, far from a support to the system In *Uttara-Gita,* which is also a dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna, the

latter asks specifically how *varna* is determined, and Krishna replies, 'Birth is not the cause, my friend, it is the virtues Even a Chandala observing a vow is considered a Brahmin' (quoted in Sharma 2000 165).

This is as far as Sanskritic texts are concerned about caste But there is also a vast body of non-Sanskritic literature, composed by *bhakti sants*, which is considered equally sacred by its followers as the *shruti*, which is strongly opposed to the caste system This dates from about 6th century AD itself from Tamil Nadu, spreading all over India In spite of such widespread opposition to caste, the system survived due to factors which had nothing to do with religion (see Nadkarni 2003, 2008 Ch 2)

My second point of difference with Oommen is about his contention that there is no scope for upward movement for untouchables within the Hindu society In my publications referred above, I have given an account of the Nadars' movement in Tamil Nadu and Ezhavas' movement in Kerala, the latter led by Shri Narayana Guru, which point to the contrary Before the movement, the two communities were regarded as outcastes and looked down upon like untouchables They achieved upward mobility within the Hindu society There surely are other such examples in the rest of India, which need to be documented

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BOOK REVIEWS

Antony Palackal and Wesley Shrum (eds.): *Information society and development The Kerala experience* Jaipur· Rawat Publications, 2007, 234 pp , Rs 525 (hb) ISBN 81-316-0152-8

Literature on information and communication technologies (ICTs) in India is dominated by production-side studies, especially on the software sector Studies on consumption of ICTs, especially from a sociological perspective, are inadequate The volume under review, an outcome of a session at the World Summit on Information Society, 2005 and the World Science Project, attempts to fill the gap, and succeeds partially It focuses on Kerala, and has eleven chapters authored by scholars, bureaucrats, and activists

Within a broader framework – the use of ICTs in public governance and by the scientific community – the book presents/analyses three themes electronic governance projects, use of Internet by scientists, and implementation of free software All but three of the chapters are based on secondary data and personal observations Hence, the chapters read like reviews and personal viewpoints of the authors

Among the empirical chapters, Anderson's presents the qualitative data analysis process, including the node tree, which is insightful Three chapters on the use of ICTs by women scientists, especially Internet, are noteworthy contribution to the social studies of science and have academic rigor in terms of linkage with the extant theoretical knowledge and methodology The chapter by Kuriyan and Bussell shows that the status of various egovernance projects is linked to differing development objectives Sadasivan's brief presentation of the introduction of ICTs in a research laboratory and Prabakar and Arun's narrative on open and free software in ICT education are good ethnographic attempts and are valuable supplementary material on the social shaping of technology

Although the book is titled as *Information Society and Development*, theoretical contribution towards either of the concepts is not present Introduction by the editors provides adequate summary of the chapters, but does not set a strong platform for the book. Hence readers will be left to make decisions on the theoretical component of the book Also,

chapters are broadly divided into two sections, 'circumventing the digital divide' and 'development discourse', but ideas are widely scattered and not backed by strong methodology In fact, three chapters do not have references at all, showing lack of dialogue with the literature The chapters by bureaucrats on egovernance projects read like official reports of the government Similarly, the chapters on free software have activist flavour and ignore the merits of the sponsored or proprietary technologies Material on Akshaya, an egovernance project, is repeated in three chapters According to the literature, the term 'ICT-Enabled Information Systems' is incorrect and needs to be defined clearly

Diligent selection and one more round of review of chapters would have resulted in a small, but an important book than the present one The book cannot be used as a stand-alone read, but it is a useful additional source to those who are familiar with literature on ICT for development, scientific community, and globalisation of science

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Bishnu C. Barik and Umesh C. Sahoo (eds.): *Panchayati raj institutions and rural development Narratives of inclusion of excluded* Jaipur Rawat Publications, 2008, xii + 290 pp , Rs 625 (hb) ISBN 81-316-0107-2

This book is an outcome of a National Seminar on 'Panchayati Raj Institutions and Rural Development in Western India' organised by the School of Social Sciences at Swami Ramanand Teerth Marathwada University, Nanded (Maharashtra) in February 2006 It contains fourteen selected papers presented by sociologists and social scientists addressing some crucial issues in rural development in the background of panchayati raj institutions (PRIs) as institutions of participatory democracy and empowerment of the marginalised The introduction outlines the background of the seminar and the broad areas of PRIs and rural development such as PRIs and civil society, PRIs and empowerment of the members, Finances and PRIs, rural development programmes and PRIs, and panchayati raj and human rights

Partha Nath Mukherjee's keynote address, captioned 'Representative and Participatory Democracy Indigenisation of Indian Democracy', traces the history of participatory democracy in India in its various phases since the British period The views of Gandhi, Nehru, Tagore, Gosh, Roy, Vinoba, and Jayaprakash Narayan on panchayats, the

Community Development Programme experiment after independence, and the importance given to PRIs in various Five-Year Plans are discussed Mukherjee concludes with a positive note, as what Gandhi and Ambedkar would have commented had they been alive Good you have begun realising, better late than never!

The remaining papers of the book can be grouped into three categories The papers in the first category address the marginalised communities B S Baviskar on 'Including the Excluded, Empowering the Powerless Case Studies of Panchayati Raj in Maharashtra', R B Patil on 'Empowerment of Scheduled Castes and Women A Study of Three Villages in Kolhapur District', Archana Kamble and Sarjerao Salunkhe on 'Factors Influencing Women's Participation in PRIs', Gaurang R Sahay on 'Decentralisation, Panchayati Raj and the Rights of Marginalised Groups in India A Case for Civil Society', B B Mohanty on 'Development through People's Empowerment Lessons from Rural Maharastra' and Santosh Kumar on 'Impact of Positive Discrimination on Leadership of Marginalised Sections in Rural Governance Some Concerns Highlighted' These papers highlight the plight of the marginalised communities (scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, other backward classes, and women), obstacles to their empowerment, provisions of the 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution, and the impetus given to participatory democracy and its positive impact in the direction of an mainstreaming them through PRIs

The second category of papers addresses the structure and functioning of panchayats as grassroots institutions of participatory democracy The papers by R Siva Prasad on 'Can the Modern and the Traditional Panchayats Co-exist in Schedule V Areas', Aureliano Fernandes on 'Empowerment of PRI Representatives Framework and Realities', Satyakam Joshi on 'Functioning of Panchayati Raj in Scheduled Areas of Gujarat', Kunj Bihari Nayak on 'New Panchayati Raj System in India as an Agency of "Bottom-up Approach" to Rural Development A Review', Manish Thakur on 'Representing Village State, Rural Development and the Villager' examine the role of panchayats, nature of leadership, implementation of development programmes, bottom-up approach in development planning, etc

The third category includes the paper on 'Inter-Associational Conflicts and Cooperation – Implications for Development A Case Study of Two Villages in Karnataka' by Ozmond Roshan D'Souza This paper based on an empirical study emphasises sustaining social capital and concludes that accumulation of social capital in any association depends on the process of participation, and on participants – why, what levels and how

This book is a blend of theoretical, conceptual, and empirical studies that adds to our understanding of the panchayati raj institutional approach to development-planning with people's participation and empowerment of the marginalised within the framework of civil society and inclusive growth at grassroots level

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Chitta Ranjan Das: *A revolutionary in education Kristen Kold – A pioneer of Danish folk high school movement* (translated from Oriya by Ananta Kumar Giri) Delhi Shipra Publications, 2008, vii + 148 pp , Rs 395 (hb) ISBN 978-81-7541-399-3

The book under review is a biographical work on Kristen Kold, a revolutionary in education in Denmark Though it focuses on the life history of Kold, it also discusses the visions of Bishop Gruntdvig and the social life of Denmark In Denmark, the Folk High Schools Movement emerged in the mid-19th century This movement created new possibilities of people's enlightenment and contributed to the rise of farmer's movements, co-operative movement and the wider democratic transformation in the country On the whole, the movement drew inspiration from Gruntdvig, a visionary Though Gruntdvig is the venerable thinker of a new renaissance in education in Denmark, it is Kold who put this vision into a lively experiment

Kold, in his system, established the annual schedule in a unique way as the school works for the boys in winter, for the girls in summer, annual training for the teachers during harvest holidays He had decided that he would not give the prescribed books in the hands of children, as he did not want the soul of his students killed by compelling them to memorise such a book But the government officials could not accept this, as it was believed that everyone should walk on the same beaten track Consequently, there was opposition from both the church and the educational establishment to Kold's experiments In fact, they started a rival folk high school But, despite obstacles from the authorities, Kold became a great teacher

In overall assessment, though Kold's experiment inspires the readers, it is sad to note the vacuum in the next generation to take up his cause after his death Apart from this, the upper classes of Denmark were not able to understand his groundwork of a Danish renaissance As most of Kold's ideas, which are presented in this book, seem to be acceptable, except the one which says, 'No body should be absent in the school

without the permission of the teacher and there should be provision for severe punishment for this' (p 133) Besides, the position of providing private teaching along with the universal schools seems to be unclear

While the book under review will be of interest to those concerned with social transformation through education, it fails to provide any reference to Koldian experiments in other countries and contexts Anyone interested in knowing more about the Kold's movement will be disappointed by the absence of such a bibliography

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Jan Breman: *The poverty regime in village India Half a century of work and life at the bottom of the rural economy in South Gujarat* New Delhi. Oxford University Press, 2007, xvix + 458 pp , Rs 795 (hb) ISBN 0-19-569083-4

In Indian social science literature, studies of poverty have almost exclusively been the preserve of economists Even as sociologists and social anthropologists have been quite articulate in pointing out economist's fixation with the 'poverty-line' approach, their endless statistical exercises, and their one-sided approach to reality as such, they have equally been complicit in making it an economic issue by not investigating poverty in any rigorous and sustained manner More often than not, sociologists have invested their energy in blaming economists for their closed-shop mentality, and for their preoccupation with enumerating, measuring and monitoring the scale and extent of poverty True, any understanding of human deprivation in quantitative terms alone is bound to be partial Such an exercise essentially obscures the inequality that is the underlying cause of poverty, besides ignoring the qualitative dimensions of the phenomenon And it is this insight that animates Jan Breman's 'detailed report on dynamics of poverty and destitution in the rural slums' (p 6)

The present volume is the result of Breman's return to the villages of his earlier fieldwork between 2004 and 2006 The empirical information contained in it is the cumulative outcome of fieldwork done in four villages in south Gujarat Yet, it is not a village monograph in the classic sense Breman's focus is on agricultural labourers who lead poverty-stricken lives at the bottom of the village economy In methodological terms, the book signals the usefulness of the technique of village restudies In three of the four cases, restudies have been undertaken by

Breman himself, whereas one village was the fieldwork site for another ethnographer

This longitudinal design interwoven within the overall framework of participant observation enables the author to marshal an impressive statistical database and also show variations within it in terms of the nature of the agricultural economy, proximity to urban centres, access to industrial employment, and the caste and class identity of the employers Not surprisingly, we get a close-up view on poverty which demonstrates that 'the lives of the poor are interwoven with those of the non-poor' (p 7)

In Breman's accounts, the village emerges as a contested arena Although relatively more members of the higher castes have left the village and the demographic balance has turned in favour of the lower castes, change in social composition of the village has not led to any noticeable decline in influence of the dominant caste The latter have not given up their land, which has always been the source of their local hegemony On the contrary, there is a perceptible increase in their local power as they utilise the social capital earned outside the village by virtue of their access to government agencies, political parties, religious organisations, co-operatives, schools, hospitals and other civil institutions

Moreover, the ideas and practices of dominant castes/classes at the village level are suffused with the elements of Social Darwinism 'Seen from the top of society, those at the bottom do not count, and rightly so as they simply do not have the qualities required to advance themselves' (p 438) The inferiority of the lower classes is an article of faith among the dominant caste groups The idea of natural inequality appears to be the cornerstone of social fabric As Breman puts it, 'a hierarchical order in terms of superiority and inferiority justifies a regime founded not on equality, social justice, and equity, but on shoring up the privilege of the few at the expense of discriminating the many' (p 134)

However, the rural underclasses do have an awareness of the right to live and work in freedom There are signs that they have refused to internalise dependence and subordination, and they are no longer prone to a docile acceptance of deprivation The assertion of their right to a decent and dignified life fuels many a spontaneous, localised and sporadic clashes To be sure, this resistance has not taken the form of sustained and organised mobilisation Consequently, class polarisation in the villages has not given rise to a *'classe dangereuse'* (p 437)

The free play of the market too fails to bring any succour to them Instead of offering an escape to the landless from the regime of poverty, the way the market mechanism works helps them to remain stuck in

misery The prevalent modes of organising economic activities – piece-work and contract labour, casual rather than permanent employment, and hire-and-fire – generally favour capital than labour Breman is not arguing that informalisation is the only cause of poverty It is also that labour supply in the lower echelons of the economy is much larger than the demand for it In such a scenario, capitalism undoubtedly produces poverty rather than mitigating, let alone ending, massive misery Also, 'with no schooling and other forms of social capital, only a relatively small part of the enormous landless mass has the opportunity to escape an agrarian regime that needs them much less than it used to' (*ibid*) Growing divergence between the top and the bottom of the village population is also related to the fact that the dominant high castes are not anchored in agriculture or in the village as they used to be in the past Evidently, the management of village lands at a distance necessitates less demand for agrarian labour

While detailing the work performed by the village poor, their income, and their relations with the employers, Breman presents a magisterial study of poverty in the Indian context More generally, he examines the manner and extent of economic and social progress in the second half of the 20th century, and its impact on the alleviation of poverty of the rural proletariat Supplemented by 134 photographs embodying heart-wrenching poverty and extreme inequalities that characterise the Indian countryside, this book deserves to be read not only by students of sociology, development studies and economics, but also by policy makers and the enlightened lay public

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Joy Deshmukh-Ranadive (ed.): *Democracy in the family Insights from India* New Delhi Sage Publications India, 2008, xiii + 237 pp , Rs 595 (hb) ISBN 9780761 936312

Family is the basic unit of human co-existence and social life It has changed more in the second half of 20th century as compared to any other period in human history and so have its connotations and perspectives Earlier, from a utilitarian structural-functional perspective, family was seen as an orderly, stable, and happy grouping, performing multifaceted functions for the individual and the society But now efforts are on to unmask the earlier masked, invisible, inegalitarian, and unfair aspects of

the family Family is now being seen as both a shelter of protection and a site of conflict and exploitation How family has influenced the lives of men and women and adults and children differently is also an important issue

In the anthology under review, Joy Deshmukh-Ranadive brings together a collection of papers that revolve around the issue of justice and democracy in the Indian family These papers were presented at the 10th National Conference of the Indian Association of Women's Studies held at Utkal University, Bhubaneshwar on 17-20 October 2002 All the papers are written from the women's studies' perspective, which views family as a site of power and discrimination and focuses on the undemocratic nature of family relationships

Besides the editorial introduction, the volume is divided into four sections Section I ('Experiencing the Family') deals with the effect of economic policies on family dynamics and householding patterns It consists of two chapters Nandita Gandhi deals with the relationship between a section of women workers as a group, new economic policies, subsequent adjustments within the household and their right to security, dignity, equal gender relations, access to adequate health, education, and empowerment This chapter is based on an empirical study of women workers in two industries in Mumbai, living in poor households These women adopt various strategies such as expenditure reduction, income enhancement, and tapping social networks These adjustments take their toll, as these women eat less, work longer, restrict leisure, and try to balance the paid and domestic work without any support from men in the patriarchal family

Women workers are treated as 'contingency workers' and their contribution is devalued Gandhi concludes that, in spite of pain and stress, women were hesitant to give up their empowerment because it was their only asset for a feeling of self-worth, as a backup for other negotiations in the household and empowerment for the future The narrative is lucid and issues important from the women's studies' perspective are highlighted However, women workers do not constitute a single category, and their own agency has a very important role to play in the way women experience and negotiate family This aspect is lacking in the narrative

Sumi Krishna explores the process of change as a scattered semi-nomadic group of tribal people of South-East India come together to form a village settlement Using personal narratives of one women of a family, she delves into whether and how indigenous democratic fabric and relatively egalitarian gender relations are retained under the ongoing structural changes These two case studies present contrasts in the life-

world and life experiences of women in an inegalitarian poor family and in a relatively egalitarian poor tribal family

Section II ('Expressing the Family') has two chapters which give expression to family through art forms, that is, songs, plays, etc Sonal Shukla studies family through feminist folk songs and points out that these songs and folk literature challenge the undemocratic relationships within the family The existence of these songs shows that, Indian women have not considered family as private and sacrosanct and they have always mocked oppressive in-laws, complained against them and given expression to their pain, fears, dreams, etc The popularity of these songs can be seen as being in continuity with the protest tradition which has existed in the Indian society

Uma Narain tries to resurrect the image of motherhood in 'Mala Hidimba', a feminist play by a male playwright Chetan Datar It gives expression to the experiences of family by a non-Aryan *rakshasa* woman, Hidimba (a character in Mahabharta) The play deconstructs, negotiates, transforms, and re-inscribes patriarchy Though the two chapters make interesting reading and raise vital issues, their analysis cannot be taken as generalised expressions of family in India

Section III ('Seeking Justice') has three papers Sita Vanka and M Nirmala Kumari try to show how rapid changes in India have given rise to new stresses and strains and newer agencies and fora such as family courts have come up for the administration of justice Based on the experience of family courts in Hyderabad and Secunderabad, they find that more people with low educational level and low socio-economic status approach these courts They argue that these courts must aim at resolving family disputes from the 'social' rather than the 'legal' angle and in a way which sustains justice and restores democracy within the family

Nandita Bhatla and Anuradha Rajan focus on women-initiated community responses to domestic justice across five sites in the country They document how women-led innovative responses have emerged and operate and how successful they are in addressing the needs of women subjected to domestic violence The sites chosen are in West Bengal, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, and Uttranchal Community responses to 'Shalishi' in West Bengal, 'Nari Adalat'/'Mahila Panch' in Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, and Uttaranchal are feminist and democratic, and these create spaces for dialogue between men and women in the community These responses can be effective only in rural communities/slums and among the lower middle/lower socio-economic strata But these do not challenge the community sentiment on which the family is based and, thus, have a limited role to play

The next chapter is devoted to a community response, 'Shalishi', in West Bengal It reveals how traditional community-/village-level dispute-resolution system still coexists with formal process of justice and how 'Shalishi', a method of arbitration, scores over formal legal justice This method drives legitimacy from the conventional norms and values of the community and is successful in dealing with domestic violence among the agricultural labourers and small peasants living in joint/extended households It works in favour of keeping the family intact, often compromising the feminist notion of empowerment Both these papers focus on families which are still closely connected to the communities in which they exist

Section IV ('Including the Excluded') has two chapters advocating the value of man in gender sensitisation process and the need for democracy in the family to be operative and functional Radhika Chopra focuses on the way men's support can be outlined and reflected upon in the context of gender equality and domestic democracy Based on research undertaken in four fieldwork sites, namely, family business, male domestic workers, male beauty parlour workers, and a boys club, she has tried to explore the formation of masculinity

In the last chapter, Deshmukh-Ranadive presents the experiences of an experimental intervention conducted in 2002-03 in Mehboobnagar district in Andhra Pradesh through the use of folk theatre – *kala satha* – with the intention of altering perceptions of members of the households towards more equal relationships between men and women The intervention was conducted within a poverty eradication programme, which normally does not yield desired results because of existing gendered perceptions This is an outcome of interventionist research and shows how everyday patterns of gender discrimination can be questioned and placed centre stage without hurting the individuals and the community sentiment

This is a well-edited book, and a common thread runs through the chapters It raises the vital issue of democracy in the family which has been a neglected area so far In the introduction, the editor opines that, with structural adjustments and globalisation, work for women within and outside the family has increased and the issue of justice in the family has gained importance, this is also the focus of all the papers in the volume

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Kameshwar Choudhary (ed.): *Globalisation, governance reforms and development in India* New Delhi: Sage Publications India Private Limited, 2007, xiii + 552 pp , Rs 1100 (hb) ISBN 9 780761 935834

Globalisation is one of the most frequently used expressions in economic and political discourses today, and it has been an on-going process for over two decades in India As we know, globalisation is not only an economic policy, but it also reflects an ideology signalling the demise of the concept of welfare state The volume under review is a welcome attempt to study the issues centring on globalisation, governance reforms and development in an integrated manner

The first section begins with the opening remarks on globalisation by Kameshwar Choudhary To him, the agenda of liberalisation, privatisation, and globalisation (LPG) and governance system represents a move towards the neo-liberal capitalist model of development He endeavours to highlight the viewpoints of various scholars on globalisation and associated processes In this section, the contributors have focussed on the theoretical and synoptic overview of the theme They advance the view that the globalisation project does not go for global integration on equal terms, but operates within the framework of hierarchical, in-egalitarian, and undemocratic structures across the globe, both within and between the nation states Hence, there emerges a call for re-organisation of institutional relations This section also covers the issues of translational citizenship, cosmopolitan democracy, and multiple-citizenship

The second section includes four papers covering state-level reforms in India Authors in this section feel that, despite decentring and restructuring processes of global capitalism, the state continues to remain an important actor The case of Gujarat testifies to the fact that increase in economic growth does not necessarily lead to human development, while the case of Andhra Pradesh indicates that the declining significance of PRIs (panchayati raj institutions) and legislation and meditation of resources through new institutional forms In Kerala too, despite a high level of human development, there has emerged anti-development and anti-people policies

Social dimensions of globalisation, governance reforms and development have been focussed in the seven papers in section three K L Sharma quotes Rajesh Kochhar's observation that 'Globalisation has prevented upper castes from accepting a diminished role and status consistent with their actual numbers ' In this process, a sort of 'cultural lag' persists between the formerly privileged middle-class and the new class of people aspiring for middle-class status Globalisation has, thus,

entrenched a middle class, which is in an advantageous position The 'space' vacated by this class is occupied by the aspiring class

In the case of Punjab, Surinder Jodhka argues that, besides a fragmentation of farming class, the shift in economic priorities due to globalisation has weakened the state, making farmer's policies less effective As far as the dalits are concerned, it is a fact that they are virtually absent from the realms like market, media, and voluntary organisations Similar is the case with tribal people, for whom LPG has enhanced the violation of rights The question remains as to how one should carry forward the struggle for equality, equal rights, justice, participation, etc from the tribal community's perspective Manoranjan Mohanty argues that the persistence of massive magnitude of poverty and exploitation makes us to think for an alternative approach, that is, through 'People's Democratic Organisations' which can make the working of panchayats and other political institutions more effective to sustain the concept of civil society, participative development, human development, and empowerment

Section four, which focuses on the cultural dimensions of globalisation, highlights that LPG has revived the fears of hegemonisation and neo-imperialism of the developed countries of the West However, creative responses in the form of hybridisation and glocalisation and reassertion of ethnic identities and revivalism will help in blunting the threats of imperialism/neo-imperialism This section also focuses on the agenda of new technologies and technological interactions with individuals and communities

The last section deals with the political dimension It has been noted that the forces of globalisation have set limits to both state sovereignty and democratic citizenship There is need to make globalisation more democratic, not just through decentralisation, but through a process of looking for new alternatives for dispersal of power among citizens to maintain the relationship between nation, state, and democracy The case of state-led collapse of the public health system has been examined, where it is found that even public funds are utilised to strengthen the private sector that provides medical care to a small section of the population All this at the behest of same global institutions (IMF and World Bank) that demands 'good governance'!

According to Anand Kumar, the present wave of market-mediated globalisation has influenced nearly every aspect of Indian society, economy, and culture The project of nation-building is getting affected by the LPG syndrome and related reforms Therefore, it is important to have a systematic understanding of the power and paradox of globalisation in India The two processes of economic integration and cultural

fragmentation, which are occurring simultaneously, have different consequences for the developed and the developing nations Thus, there is need to explore the meaning of modernisation and globalisation in different local settings

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K.N. Nair and Vineetha Menon (eds.): *Social change in Kerala Insights from micro-level studies (Studies in local-level development – 5)* Delhi Daanish Books, 2007, xv + 296 pp , Rs 595 (hb) ISBN 81-89654-38-1

This volume is the outcome of a collaborative effort among some social science research institutes in South India, working on the village re-study project under the Kerala Research Programme on Local Level Development The team of scholars who have contributed to this volume includes historians, social anthropologists, and economists

Seeking to supplement existing macro data on economic and social change in rural areas with micro-level studies, the bench-mark data used by the re-studies in the volume is that provided by the village surveys conducted during the 1961 Census Thus, the attempt is to map the socio-economic change in the selected villages between 1961 and 2000

The objective of the book is to aid social engineering by examining the extent to which the 'Kerala Model of Development', characterised by a high level of human development at low levels of per capita income, has ironed out structural inequalities in Kerala society, and the extent to which the fruits of development are shared among different social and religious groups Analysing the findings of the various studies, the editors of the volume conclude that, though changes have taken place in the villages, 'the depth, direction and trajectory of changes as revealed by macro studies may not have had the same level of impact in the different sub-regions and (that) micro processes are at work in different places which propel those regions in various directions' Furthermore, though there are changes, continuities with the traditional patterns can also be found

The studies find that participation of scheduled castes/scheduled tribes in decision-making and their access to resources and education ranged from nil to minimum, social and religious groups were characterised by internal stratification, sections within these were characterised by stark poverty and deprivation which, however, did not lead to the

formation of a composite category of the poor, the coalition and caste politics of Kerala was coming in the way of development, with co-operatives also being taken over by political rivalry and corruption, women were confined to the domestic sphere or relegated to hard labour and subjected to atrocities and sexual harassment, and traditional occupations had declined

Findings with regard to land ownership also belie the optimism of the macro surveys, showing that earlier deprived groups continue to remain so in this regard Moreover, the prosperous treat land more as a commodity than a unit of production, while the poor leave it fallow due to lack of resources Loss of grazing land, unplanned settlement and misguided aforestation are also seen Furthermore, Gulf migration has created a highly consumerist attitude, an air of artificial prosperity and a somewhat precarious religious unity among an otherwise stratified community It re-defines land-ownership patterns and widens the gap between rich and poor

The four re-studies are presented in quantitative survey style, listing out the findings in the various aspects of investigation The remaining two papers (which are incidentally not part of the re-study project), however, stand out in the book though for different reasons K N Ganesh's paper on Thirurangadi is refreshing, making out a case for an integrated approach based on a historical and human geographical perspective, treating the micro-region as an organic whole He traces local histories, 'which is a collective process in which not only the re-searchers but also the residents of the habitat and the locality participate' He effectively reveals the emergent contradiction between the original human landscape, which is production-oriented, and the new cultural landscape, which is consumption-oriented The paper, however, is silent on the social composition and inter-group dynamics in Thirurangadi R P Nair's paper on Vembayam is the only case where the findings actually corroborate the macro-level findings However, even in this case, the findings cannot be taken at face value, and they may be more due to certain special local and methodological factors, as the editors themselves observe

Like most studies which primarily focus on the broad issue of development, those in the volume barely skim over the surface of various social, cultural and political dimensions of the problem Even the references in the editorial chapter to relevant sociological literature are rather sparse and sketchy With regard to the studies conducted, it is observed in the 'Preface' that much attention could not be paid to depth and detail due to constraints of time and budget and surveys focused only on selected wards rather than entire villages This prevented comparative

analyses and interpretations across villages Further limitations include the narrow scope of the studies, the lack of a gender focus, and inability to bring out the dynamics of group and inter-personal relations and power equations

Although modest in its scope, the book addresses an important area and succeeds in providing useful feelers with regard to the extent and nature of the changes taking place in the villages It brings out the all too frequent gap between macro-level data and ground reality. It succeeds in dispelling the idyllic picture of development in Kerala Though it raises more questions than provides answers, this is perhaps where its significance lies, considering that the work admits to be of an exploratory nature

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Meeta and Rajivlochan: *Farmers suicide Facts and possible policy interventions* Pune Yashwantrao Chavan Academy of Development Administration, 2006, 263 pp , Rs 495 (hb) ISBN 81-89871-00-5

The spate of suicides of farmers in the countryside across states has become an issue of major policy concern, as it points to a crisis in the sustainability of modern farming, and raises questions about the state of rural economy and society Though the union and the respective state governments have had 'policy packages' for the prevention of these suicides, the problem continues unabated in states like Maharashtra One often finds headlines of media reports covering these suicides The government-commissioned studies and government-appointed committees have not made an in-depth inquiry into the issues associated with agrarian distress and farmer suicides Many of the studies on this problem are not scholarly by any standard, and their policy prescriptions are obviously vague and impractical Viewed in this context, the book under review that deals with this problem from a policy perspective focusing on Maharashtra is most welcome

The book has come out of a study undertaken in Yavatmal district of Maharashtra where the concentration of farmer suicides is relatively high The analysis is based on macro as well as micro levels linking primary and secondary information The book is divided into eleven sections While the fist section provides the background of the study highlighting features of rural economy and suicide rates at the regional and district levels, the second section explains the methods of the study

A review of the existing studies is carried out in the subsequent section The trend of suicides in Yavatmal and the socio-economic and demographic profile of the suicide victims, as revealed by concerned government departments, have been discussed in the fourth section The nature and extent of rural indebtedness in the district is discussed in the fifth section Based on primary information collected through interviews with the family members of suicide victims and other related individuals, the next two sections analyse the socioeconomic reasons of distress among the farmers The findings of the Situation Assessment Survey, undertaken by the National Sample Survey Organisation in 2003 across major states, have been discussed in the eighth section with special focus on Maharashtra The subsequent two sections sum up the findings of the study and recommend policy measures The issue of direct subsidy is explained in last section It is followed by an Annexure containing the interview schedule and a separate section that presents the case studies

As a whole, the authors have made an attempt to explore the micro- and macro-level reasons associated with farmer suicides and make policy prescriptions to arrest the trend However, their attempt is half-hearted The book suffers from serious weaknesses While going through the book, it is found that the analysis as well as presentation is unsystematic, incoherent, and lacks a proper perspective Though the authors have made use of a large amount of secondary as well as primary data, a significant part of them is irrelevant, and the rest of data are not analysed properly The division of the book into as many as eleven inappropriately titled sections is unimaginative Moreover, too many tables are presented without required explanation and analysis

The 'Introduction' section of the book, which runs into thirty-two pages, contains tables and graphs covering as many as twenty-six pages The little write up in this section does not serve any purpose The next section titled as 'Choosing Yavatmal' is also unsystematic The discussion under the heading 'Searching for a Solution' is entirely out of place Before the publication of this book a significant number of studies were available on this problem covering many states like Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka A careful review of these studies would certainly have helped the authors to view the problem in a more meaningful manner Unfortunately, the authors overlooked these studies and selectively reviewed only two reports on Maharashtra, the one by the Indira Gandhi Institute of Development and Research (IGIDR), Mumbai and the other by the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai Unnecessarily they have reproduced thirteen case histories of suicide victims from IGIDR reports and five from TISS reports and questioned the authenticity of their data by providing 'elaborate' information on

these cases However, the authors have not made it clear as how and why their own information on these suicide cases is authentic and dependable

The secondary data on socio-economic and demographic profile of the suicide victims, operational holdings, and the extent indebtedness in Yavatmal and neighbouring districts have been presented in a haphazard fashion in Section V without proper linkage with the rest of analysis in the study The qualitative analysis presented in the next two sections is neither lucid nor novel The inclusion of Section VIII is abrupt and should have been incorporated in the macro-level analysis Moreover, the cases presented have not been used in a proper context Instead of giving a few representative cases, the authors have given as many as 148 cases spread over eighty-one pages, covering more than 30 per cent of total pages of the book Many of the policy prescriptions are general and are in no way drawn from the analysis made in the study

On the whole, the authors have disappointed the readers and left them thirsting for insights to understand the socioeconomic problems afflicting the rural economy and society in general and farmers in particular Yet the book provides a good amount of statistical data on various aspects of agrarian problems in the Vidarhba region, especially on Yavatmal district, along with rich qualitative information on deceased farmers and their families which could be useful for further research

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Monirul Hussain: *Interrogating development State, displacement and popular resistance in north east India* (SAGE Studies on India's North East) New Delhi Sage Publications, 2008, 174 pp , Rs 270 (pb) ISBN 978-0-7619-3575-9

The volume under review is an outcome of Monirul Hussain's research assignment as part of the South Asia Regional Fellowship that he was awarded in 2004 by the Social Science Research Council, New York The study tries to understand the complex relationship between state-sponsored development projects and the consequent massive displacement of population in North-East India in general, and Assam in particular, during the post-colonial period With the help of empirical data, Hussain has taken pain to record the massive displacement process in the region, which was virtually unnoticed and unattended hitherto In the name of development the state displaced a large section of popula-

tion, mostly marginal, tribal, and other weaker sections of the society, under its various projects Despite these developmental initiatives of the state, the irony of the fact is that the region remains one of the highly underdeveloped, ethnically sensitive, and politically disturbed regions of the country.

The volume has come out at a time of crucial significance, as the Government of India had recently decided to go for around 145 mega dams for production of the hydroelectric power in the region One could imagine the process of land acquisition by the state, the consequent displacement of large section of poor, marginalised and tribal population not only physically from their land, but also from their shelter, livelihood, and socio-cultural habitat With the liberalisation and globalisation of economy and free flow of private capital into the market, the situation is going to further worsen for the common people in the region In the absence of intervention by the state, active civil society, and strong peoples movement, displaced people are instead of experiencing empowerment are becoming more and more impoverished in the post-displacement situation Benefits to the displaced persons should become an integral part of every developmental project This is possible only when the potentially displaced persons become part and parcel of the development and its decision-making process, as a matter of right To realise these cherished values, two important policy documents are required on an urgent basis to set right the hardships of the displaced people a rights-based democratic and empowering resettlement and rehabilitation policy, and a rights-based law to protect their interests

The analysis is neatly presented in five brief chapters Apart from the introductory and concluding chapters, the volume tries to list a dossier of development-induced displacement, dams and displacement, and the resistance from those threatened by such displacement There is a useful bibliography The study tries to record not only the question of physical displacement of population under various state-introduced developmental projects, but also raises the issues of the ecological sustainability and impact on the rich biodiversity of the region It makes use of existing primary and secondary data on the issues as well as generates some fresh data from the field observations based on the interaction and dialogue with people threatened by displacement Hussain's research and local background and the thorough understanding of the region (he is serving as of political science at Guwahati University) and the fresh data from the field from an ongoing larger research project of the North-Eastern Research Centre, Guwahati, further enrich the study

While concluding, Hussain observes that, there are two distinct patterns of the new politics of development paradigm emerging in the

region (i) in the absence of consensus among the political parties, including the left formations, to a political issue of such a crucial importance for the marginal people, there is an 'emergence of popular resistance outside the conventional party system based on new political cleavages is strengthening the democratic consciousness of the people living in a peripheral region of the world's largest democracy and successfully interrogating centralised post-colonial developmental paradigm of the Indian state', and (ii) 'this has situated the issue of development with the issue of livelihood, environment, rights and dignity of the citizens in the popular politics of New Social Movements' (p 155)

The research findings presented in the volume are, as admitted by Hussain, incomplete They will, nevertheless, inspire other researchers to take up further studies in the area The study raises several questions while situating the displaced people at the centre of the research rather than providing solutions

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Mumtaz Ali Khan: *Attainable rural development* New Delhi Uppal Publishing House, 2008, xv + 182 pp , Rs 595 (hb) ISBN 13 978-81-7658-043-4

The book under review is an outcome of the fieldwork undertaken by Mumtaz Ali Khan in ten villages of Devanahalli taluk which is located 48 km away from Bangalore city The main objective of the study is to assess the role of people rural development programmes and the resultant benefits accruing to them The study is based on three approaches The first approach is to formally assess the socioeconomic status of the rural people to find out the gaps and deficiencies, if any, in implementing the programmes of the state by the officials and to find out the reasons for these gaps The second approach is to prepare a project to make-up the gaps and to ensure attainability and sustainability of the progress The third approach is to assess the responses of the people to this improved mechanism

Thus, the book throws light on the methods such as consultation with the people at every stage of implementation and their involvement through discussions and demonstration Women, children, and community were all beneficiaries A few cases of blind belief in maintaining cows and consequent losses are highlighted Khan succeeds in eliciting co-

operation even from the orthodox people in the field The concept of 'pressure group' as propagated and demonstrated by the Nobel Peace awardee, Mohammed Yunus, was experimented Social concerns like co-operation and sharing in distress are presented He has also introduced new concepts like 'in-well drilling', 'village development centres', and 'village trading units' which will accelerate the process of rural development Khan, as a practitioner of rural development, has trodden all possible ways to help the poor, and he largely succeeds in his objective Through this micro-level study he has shown the way to attain rural development

Khan has been endowed with the rare missionary zeal in serving the poor Having been engaged in making some rural development efforts in ten villages in Devanahalli taluk for twenty long years, he has noted with seriousness the ground realities which prompted him to plan the intervention through his own NGO, 'Integrated Family Welfare Unit' The various development programmes initiated in these villages reached the farmers, dalits, and backward classes With the assistance from Christian Children's Fund and other funding agencies he started implementing these programmes His special contribution was building a hospital called 'Mother Theresa Rural Hospital' with ten-bed accommodation An orphanage was set up and named as 'Green House' He has tried to bring to light the role of the grassroots level officials in extending the benefits of government programmes to the rural poor He has also stressed the role of the extension workers of the agriculture science universities and animal science universities

The study takes the form of a narrative There are no tables or percentages in the book Khan's conviction appears to be that qualitative information in a case study is far more appropriate than a load of quantified data During his fieldwork, he had to bear the brunt of irate public But a section of the society stood with him in all his development activities To quote from his introduction 'I adopted a few challenging techniques in the process of implementing the programmes I had to face quite a lot of difficulties and sometimes harassment from the powerful vested interests Anti-poor groups gave maximum headache I had to exercise unbelievable patience But by and large people were co-operative and responsive '

Khan deserves to be complemented for his painstaking action research on rural development

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Nandu Ram (ed.): *Dalits in contemporary India Discrimination and discontent* (Volume 1) New Delhi: Siddhant Publications, 2008, 316 pp, Rs 700 (hb) ISBN 978-81-904653-1-1

Dalits in Contemporary India Discrimination and Discontent (Volume 1) is collection of eleven scholarly articles In the introduction to the volume, the editor traces the journey of deprivation and discontent among the dalits in contemporary India He explains who are the dalits and what are the different connotations given by scholars, the state, and activists to the term 'dalit' An attempt is made to analyse the situation of dalits in socio-historical context

The volume has three parts In Part I: 'Dalit Assertion in Socio-Historical Perspective', the paper on 'Dalit Movement in India A Perspective from the Below', by Nandu Ram, focuses on the dalit movement, and offers a review of perspectives from below without rejecting any perspective from above, if one exists Ram outlines the ideology of dalit movement and what it intends to achieve The perspective from below is a viable framework to understand the issues concerning their socio-religious disabilities and other economic and political deprivations. It also looks at the styles of protest, and linkages between caste, class, and gender

The article on 'The Entangled Endeavours The Satnamis of Chattisgarh', by Saurabh Dube, reflects on the ritual status of Satnamis, and how they established the *guru parampara* to match the Hindu religion It was a struggle to overcome their marginalisation, and to prove that they are different from the Hindus The Satnamis challenged the ritual power of the Hindus The article 'Participation of Untouchables in the Freedom Movement The Case of Bairwas in Northern India', by Shyamlal, refers to participation of the Bairwas from different regions – such as Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, Rajshthan, and Jaipur – in the freedom movement The article on 'Imagination, Participation and Nation A Biography of an Untouchable Nationalist', by Badri Narayan, narrates the story of the relationship of an untouchable with nationalism and the Chamar links with the national struggle Imagination is the medium for the dalits to connect to the nation, and they had different meanings of freedom, Congress, and Gandhi

Part II 'Dalit Identity Past and Present' deals with the question of dalit identity The paper on 'Dalits in India Past Identities and Present Scenario', by J K Pundir, gives a description how dalit identity has undergone change and the how dalit movements in different regions have played important an role in shaping the new dalit identity The article on 'The Crafting of Human Bodies and The Racialisation on Caste in India',

by Subhadra Mitra Channa, discusses how race becomes a form of discrimination in human societies The aesthetic values in Indian society were standardised by the British colonisers, what dress code lower-caste and higher-caste people will practice was decided by the norms set by particular castes A detailed article on 'Dalit Identity Formation The Case of Marathwada Region', by S L Gaikwad, offers comparative analysis of the self-image of different castes, and the problems encountered by them in constructing their identity Focusing on the Marathwada region, through an empirical exercise, Gaikwad tries to explain identity in relation to socio-economic conditions He also brings out the significance of scheduled caste organisations in accessing modern civic opportunities

In Part III 'Caste Prejudice and Conflict in Rural Areas', the article titled 'Locating Caste Conflicts in Punjab A Study of Jat-Dalit Conflict in a Village', by Paramjit S Judge, attempts to explain the cause of conflict between the upper-caste Jat Sikhs and dalit Sikhs in Punjab It is interesting to note the changing occupational profile of dalits and their emigration, and how this has led to the emergence of classes among the dalits, which, in turn, has brought changes in their social relationship The article on 'Caste and the Regional Context "Prejudice" and "Pollution" in Rural Punjab', by Surinder S Jodhka, discusses how the dalit castes are disassociating from their traditional caste occupations and accepting new occupations The article on 'Dalits of Bihar Protests Against Discrimination', by A K Lal, exposes discrimination against dalits in Bihar, and their exclusion from access to land Dalits in Bihar still have to depend on upper castes, but there is a strong resentment among them against their socio-economic exploitation The politics of caste pluralism has not helped the dalits The last article titled 'Changing Trajectory of Dalit Assertion in Uttar Pradesh', by Vivek Kumar, discusses the assertion by dalits in general, and focuses on the situation in Uttar Pradesh Kumar explains the usage of the term dalit in restricted and broader social contexts The dalits in Uttar Pradesh are not homogeneous and are divided into sixty-six castes Kumar marshals data to illustrate the status dalits in Uttar Pradesh He notes that the structural changes have brought socio-political consciousness among the dalits in different parts of the country, there has been a shift in orientation of dalit assertion from social reform to capture of political power

Overall the book is a welcome addition to our understanding of contemporary situation of dalits

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Ranjana Harish and V. Bharathi Harishankar (eds.) *Re-defining feminisms* Jaipur Rawat Publications, 2008, ix + 278 pp , Rs 595 (hb) ISBN 81-316-0123-4

The re-definition of feminisms in India, as the title of the volume under review suggests, consists of twenty-one interdisciplinary writings of activists, journalists, novelists, poets, theatre activists, researchers, and teachers using techniques of personal experiences, empirical research, and narratives Re-definition comprises of four components, namely, re-designing, re-thinking, re-viewing, and re-marking – all presented as hyphenated processes, the significance of which is important to locate in the way the contributors have argued the issue

The re-design involves an interrogation and a meaningful restatement of the changing faces of feminism in India starting from personal realisations of 'personal is political', 'women's rights are human rights', and, ultimately, accepting 'feminism as a politically conscious way of life' by the feminists Since women in India are not a homogenous category, we need to deal with the heterogeneity of women Women with disabilities experience double oppression, as both are social constructs The study of a women's group working for women suffering in their families suggests that woman wants to continue in her married life Only when it becomes absolutely unbearable, she tries to seek help Once she has registered her protest loudly and clearly, she would live on her own terms, either separately or within family The discourse on sexual harassment at work place provides detailed theoretical guidelines and empirical accounts of the cases along with an appraisal for remedial measures, thus completing the re-design of feminism

Re-thinking is the second step for re-defining feminisms Each of the six articles expands the act of looking back to comprehend the why, what and how of the progress of the original thinking process The reinterpretation of Michelangelo's painting – Original Sin – shows that there are different ways of looking at the story of Adam and Eve, for example, the artist's depiction of woman as the serpent holding women responsible for all sins could be challenged An examination of women's writings in India in regional languages, beginning from the 19th century, shows a four-phase development, namely, the submissive, progressive, regressive, and assertive The writers of assertive phase wrote from the perspective of the woman, and on the issues that concerned women most These are bold accounts of the self The power and the practices of theatre represent a kind of alternative to rebuild the images The representation of masculinity and femininity, performing gender, and gendering stage in terms of space and choreography shows the politics of representation and

construction of gender even through Indian Media One is reinforcing the stereotypes, and the other, resisting and rejecting the stereotypes This section also raises a pertinent question on gender and sexualities – alternative female sexualities in the context of women's movement

The re-view section provides an across-the-discipline trajectory on literature and society The articles here highlight the reconstruction of religious stereotypes It has been argued that Christ has been constructed to suit the patriarchal structures of Christianity, otherwise, there are many feminist dimensions of Christ's appearance The analysis of social reform movements in 19th century India within colonialism and modernity binds women into the confines of the house, giving rise to many anti-women practices in the society Woman figures in temple. sites of Khajuraho, Modhera, and Konark represent multiple disciplines in which women participated It ranges from actual fights, teaching, sculpture, architecture, dance, and music to her different moods and behaviour, technical and mechanical orientation, and seduction The stereotypes, culturally imposed barriers constructed around the women's beauty and bodies found in different forms like sculptures, media representations, and women athletes have also been put under re-view

The section on re-mark is actually re-marking of the discipline – the literature The contributors of this section go back and forth to highlight the hidden spaces of women It is through the *Shakti* of women that the country could achieve equality, social reforms and political emancipation The representation of dalit women raises the issue of caste-gender nexus of marginalisation The dalit women are oppressed by the upper castes as well as the dalit men Thus, their 'specific and simultaneous' oppression has to be combated together The matrilineal space of the Nair community shows the strong incursions of patriarchy – women are always under the supremacy of man In their case, the difference is that power is in the hands of woman's brother instead of her husband

The explorations of theatre presentations depict the mental and physical violence the Indian women experience in their daily life The plays make the audience realise that the social and political order is not natural but constructed in favour of men by men Surely, the plays focus on sharing of experiences and enabling women to create new hopes to transform the social order A psychodynamic perspective into the familial and social restrictions of the times by taking the life and works of a 19th century poet who carved her own space/identity with in patriarchy Her feminism is not anti-male or against patriarchy, but she flourished as a poet by celebrating differences Lastly, a metaphoric quest for self-realisation in the context of man-woman relationship and

the looking-glass image in the poetry of Kamala Das seems to assure 'woman' that changes are bound to come with the passage of time

The arguments bound tightly from beginning to end with a common thread into a pattern are the strengths of the book, and a ray of hope for change for the sensitive minds The book has a lot to offer to any reader across disciplines and interests, though the basic task to re-define feminisms (in plural) remains unfinished Perhaps, the process of construction and re-re-construction would go on so long as we do not have gender equality However, one realises that the post-modern method of playing with the words is basically a construction, and it is neither a view nor a review, because postmodernism refutes plausibility of generalisation

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Rohini Sahni, V. Kalyan Shankar and Hemant Apte (eds.): *Prostitution and beyond An analysis of sex work in India* New Delhi Sage Publications India Private Limited, 2008, 369 pp , Rs 395 (pb) ISBN 978-0-7619-3638-1

This volume is an excellent collection of twenty-three essays on the diverse perspectives on sex work in India It seeks to address the phenomenon of sex work through its sections on feminist discourse, ethnographic studies, socioeconomic-legal-health framework, and cultural reflections The existing literature on sex work in India being 'fragmented', the present volume has attempted to 'bring about a coherence of issues that are pertinently entwined' and thereby 'surface the inherent inter-relations that together form the complexity of sex work' in the country The topics covered, though not exhaustive, are as diverse and representative as possible In addition to painstaking research, the volume also incorporates case studies, live discussions, and interviews drawing from the experiences of a wide spectrum of professionals and organisations working with sex workers There are five meaningful sketches drawn by S Patwardhan to counter the stereotypical images of sex work

The first section endeavours to review various theoretical positions on sex work, and the way the sex workers have developed independent voices in the Indian context The question that is pertinent here is why did not the women's movement in India consider sex work or sex workers as an integral part of the movement? The need for sex worker's

voice becomes even more germane in the context of contrasting ideologies and views of insiders For instance, two well-known organisations from Kolkata, namely, Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee and Sanlaap, differ broadly in their analysis of prostitution and the rights of prostitutes

Geetanjali Gangoli overviews the journey of mainstream feminist movement in India and their evolving positions of immorality, hurt, and choice in viewing sex work The discussion is followed by a debate among women activists on related issues Swati Ghosh reviews the 'Sex Workers' Manifesto', which was presented as the theme paper of the First National Conference of the Sex Workers in Kolkata in 1997 This section ends with an appealing article by Anagha Tambe on the dimension of caste-based sexual exploitation for understanding the framework of prostitution in India

The second section deals with changing forms of prostitution and its emerging realities based on some real life stories A reading of these five papers here would make one realise that the term 'sex work' is a linguistic homogenisation and does not do justice to the diversity of prostitution in India today Rekha Pandey's exploration of the changes in ritualised prostitution from the *devadasis* to *jogins* in Andhra Pradesh and R C Swarankar's discussion on community-based sex work among Nat women in Rajasthan reveal the historicity of the practice Bindumadhab Khire attempts to expand the analysis by incorporating the experience of male sex-workers The paper on the ethnographic profile of Dharwad sex workers by Ambuja Kowlgi and V K Hugar is followed by an illuminating discussion on the call-girl network in Kolkata by Ishita Majumdar and Sudipta Panja These seemingly identical urban experiences of sex work beyond brothel tell us about the diversity of socioeconomic background of sex workers, the nature of their clientele, and the vast extremes of monetary realisation associated with them

The third section provides an interface of economic, social, legal, and health perspectives on sex work in India It contains six papers and the legal sub-section is supplemented by four case studies, commentaries, and interviews This section begins with an excellent paper on market, histories, and prostitution by Rohini Sahni and V Kalyan Shankar It goes beyond the economics of sex work in the country and incorporates the sociological aspects of prostitution Meena Seshu discusses the impact of stigmatisation on sex workers based on her grassroots experiences The article on the legal framework of prostitution in India by Manoj Wad and Sharyu Jadav is informative, but the critical appraisals of such provisions through supplementary short articles/case studies/interviews are repetitive and less illustrative A critical paper on

the practical aspects of legal framework would have thrown light on the intricacies of prostitution and trafficking in contemporary India The menacing risk of AIDS has overshadowed the discussions on health and rights of sex workers by V Sahasrabuddhe and S Mehendale as well as M Shivdas The editors have, however, attempted to fill the gap by shedding light on the regular health concerns of the sex workers by interviewing an expert on the field

The last section delves into the cultural impacts of prostitution in language, cinema, theatre, and the media While Gayatri Chatterjee looks into the representation of prostitutes and courtesans in Indian languages, literature, and cinema, Apte and Sahni study the etymology of words for prostitution in Marathi vocabulary These studies reveal how language and representation serve as tools for perpetuating social inequalities Lata Singh's paper on theatre and femininity investigates the issue of middle-class quest for respectability Finally, S P Shah logistically examines how narratives of danger and moral decline inflect a red-light area in Mumbai

On the whole, this volume tries to counter the stereotypical image of sex work and attempts to mitigate the negativity that normally get associated with any mention of sex work I, however, expected a full discussion on certain vital and related issues like trafficking, child prostitution, and child marriage in the volume Nevertheless, it is thoroughly insightful and appealing in exploring several sociological issues related to sex work in the country today

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Samir Dasgupta and Ray Kiely (eds.): *Globalization and after* New Delhi Sage Publications, 2006, 443 pp , Rs 550 (pb) ISBN 0-7619-3506-1

This book is a collection of sixteen essays written by authors from across the world, from USA to India and, in between, East Asia and Europe The contributors include from the past president of International Sociological Association, Immanuel Wallerstein to a Master's student in Hong Kong The essays are not classified into groups/sections on the basis of themes, as the editors claim, the focus is on 'beyond the unending debates on globalisation' This volume examines the impact of global capitalism on anti-global solidarity and resistance The question, 'Does globalisation create a situation of civilisational clash or end of

history?', appears to be pertinent, and this attempt has been claimed to have been made in this volume in various essays The volume claims to capture the essence of both the empirical and conceptual reflections In one sentence, the essence is that 'the process of globalisation is far from unilinear and there is no turning back the clock' (p 11)

In the neatly presented prologue, 'The Turning of the Tide', Barry K Gills concludes that it implies a sense of history, an understanding of human development in the long term and the evolution of the global human community as the main subject of understanding It is assumed that globalisation has led to unbalanced outcomes between and within countries The upsurge of insecurity, inequality, political turbulence, conflicts and wars, and vulnerability to uncontrolled changes are signalling a new transformation What after that? This constitutes the occasion of inquiry and essence of the present volume In his celebrated essay, reproduced in this book, Wallerstein observes the continuing second phase of the Kondratieff cycle of the capitalist world economy which has entered into its period of terminal crisis which is also the highpoint of US hegemony in the world system Furthermore, he views it as monopoly of the last stage over weapons of mass destruction, leaving behind and passing through the phases of other monopolies like technological, financial, on natural resources, media and mass communication This monopoly is causing concern all over and there is no perfect remedy yet appears to be coming up

It is argued that the globalisation itself has entered into another phase which is labelled as neo liberal globalisation In future, globalisation should not be the abrogation of the rights of nation states to self-determination The essays take note of 'who are getting benefits of globalisation' and the worsening situation of certain developing economies Globalisation has entailed anti-globalisation movements around the world on various dimensions of society affected by it 'Globalised anti-globalisation movements' is asserted as a product of the process of globalisation itself These are seen from the dilemma of 'revolutions of rising expectations' and 'revolutions of rising frustrations' (p 157) It is argued that post-global is not an end to globalisation, but the emergence of a different kind of arrangement fundamentalism and imperial hegemony begin to emerge as new forms of global engagement Over stress and identity crises are considered as its fallouts

Dasgupta observes that 'we face a global environmental crisis in near future, if we are now not in it already' and these tendencies are hardly new in the light of the understanding of the dark ages of the past Ecological future we cannot anticipate, he asserts, as the paths to

recovery are limited We will continue to see turmoil much like of the Bronze Age George Ritzer also finds similarities and differences between glocalisation and globalisation He claims globalisation tends to be associated with the proliferation of nothing Robyn Bateman Driskell looks at the loss of territorial community in global society, though it may be found in terms of cyber space as a set of impersonal relations and a psychological community through voluntary associations Jarrod Wiever and Jessica Young trace 'war on terror', a fall out of '9/11', as the 'after globalisation' in which application of power is necessary

Other five essays focus on the anti-globalisation movements which are seen to have emerged and got accelerated by the very process of globalisation One illustrates the empirical situation It is concluded that membership of the anti-globalisation movements is split between small violent minorities and a huge non-violent majority Success of such movements and viability of an alternative to it depend on the victory of non-violence as a universal principle The essay by Ernest M De Zolt examines the effects of global economic expansion on organised resistance Review of the cases of organised resistance indicates nationalising and in some cases internationalizing the resistance Though the advantage of the recent struggles outweighs the disadvantages, they are yet to gain influence over governing laws to the extent that their sustainability will be secured It is suggested that a new pattern of global struggle may arise with indigenous people demanding entitlement over their lands, causing problems for nations, be they core, semi-peripheral or peripheral, and we may see a significant decline in economic dominance by the core nations

Tomas Mac Sheoin and Nicola Yeates consider that social and political conflict is integral to the process of globalisation The world in post-World War II has not only become more integrated, but also more turbulent, in part due to more interdependence They place more emphasis on the novelty of anti-globalisation-movement politics in its transitional and global scope Some are, of course, a hangover of the old, locally or nationally based, but they largely are locally or nationally based and composed of respect for diversity Sing C Chew Sin highlights new pattern of labour insurgencies in the context of flexible employment in Hong Kong The new patterns engender new organisations in terms of coalition with other groups, namely, students, supported by funded campaigns and new resources to challenge flexible employment These patterns of labour insurgencies are burgeoning as well, spreading to other parts of the world through vibrant networking

The last essay, on new social movements, illustrates the situation in South Asian nations which are found linked to mainstream development-

thinking and emerging problems in these nations Ponna Wignaraja argues that it raises new implications for governance He highlights emerging dangers of polarisation between rich and poor, environmental degradation, youth alienation, etc Lessons from the studies indicate participatory development at the micro-level as a new approach to poverty alleviation which is economically viable and cost-effective and may help political stability in the region He asserts that, without regional co-operation on core issues, no one could effectively manage the transition He considers that new social contract between the poor and the state is a pre-requisite which will help regenerate the eroded trust between the stakeholders

The volume provides a comprehensive reading on globalisation, its theorisation, particularly by focusing on the anti-globalisation movements which are a product of globalisation It is a good reading for all those interested in understanding the emerging scenario of the 21st century political economy in general and that of the developing world in particular

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Sheila Bunwaree and Roukaya Kasenally (eds.): *Rights and development in Mauritius A reader* Reduit University of Mauritius. Ossrea Mauritius Chapter, 2007, viii + 269 pp , price not mentioned ISBN 978-99903-73-25-7

Human rights demand a life in which the inherent dignity and worth of each individual will receive respect and protection, whereas development is a comprehensive process whose main objective is improvement of the economic, social and political well-being of individuals through realisation of various human rights such as civil, cultural, economic, political, and social Thus, human rights and development share a common goal, which is to secure freedom, well-being and dignity of all people every where The links between human rights and development have also been well established through the rights-based approaches to development by the United Nations, which strongly believes that 'democracy, development and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are interdependent and mutually reinforcing' The volume under review has dealt with this issue in the context of Mauritius, as a result of globalisation processes

It has been argued by the editors Sheila Bunwaree and Roukaya Kasenally that Mauritius should not permit the forces of globalisation to undermine the role of the state apparatus Instead, efforts should be made to keep the human-rights approach visible in the development process Furthermore, as highlighted in the volume, there appears no antagonism between human rights and development The concept of 'immiserising' growth has created a false perception that there is a neglect of human rights and marginalisation of certain groups with the faster rate of economic growth However, under certain conditions, a rise in the level of consumption can lead to an impoverishment of the society in terms of drop in the social welfare function including human rights

The volume contains eleven papers related to various aspects of human rights in the process of development of the Mauritian society Laura Jeffrey highlights the case of Chagossians, an uprooted and displaced community Jeffrey portrays the struggles of Chagossian political groups to achieve the right to return to their land, that is, Chagos Archipelago, and discusses the unresolved dispute between the United Kingdom and the Mauritian government concerning sovereignty over the territory Sadda Reddi shows that, in the 1960s and 1970s, the concept of development shifted from that of improvement in physical capital to that of enhancing human capital development According to him, human capital is pivoted around two aspects, namely, education and health of the citizen Roukaya Kasenally questions the position of English language vis-à-vis French in Mauritian society, as, despite being the official language, there has been a sharp decline in its use This could result in a large section of the population of Mauritius being unable to participate in the new economic spheres of the globalised world

Vicram Ramharai argues that, despite introduction of educational reforms, the core problems related to wastage of human capital and discrimination against the children of disadvantaged communities have not been addressed by the educational institutions Daniella Police deals with the non-inclusion of slave descendents, namely, the 'Creoles', into the mainstream Mauritian society She highlights the fact that the economic benefits have not trickled down to the bottom strata, that is, the Creole community, resulting in poverty According to her, the eradication of poverty is a major challenge to sustainable human development in Mauritius

Aveeraj Peedoly exposes the short-lived benefits of participation in the global production networks for the industrial development of Mauritius Global competition, in his analysis, is placing downward pressure on labour standards and enhancing erosion of industrial relations Sheila Bunwaree interrogates the role played by Export

Processing Zones in empowerment of women and their impact on gender relations in Mauritius She argues that, due to the multiple dis-empowering processes at work, the feminisation of employment, instead of leading to empowerment, has brought about feminisation of poverty.

Samad Ramoly examines the negative effects of an institutionalised form of corruption on the basic democratic principles, the rights of the citizens, and the wealth of the nation He envisages an urgent need to address the critical issue of corruption and identifies certain measures that can lead to a less corrupt Mauritius Nita Deerpalsing criticises the existing democratic set-up in Mauritius which denies participation and representation within the political sphere to the large population of women According to her, this is an example of clear denial of citizen's right to freedom and equity and is a black spot in the political set-up, especially as Mauritius is seen as a near perfect democracy by the Africa

Adam Tolnay describes the loopholes in the IT industry, which rests more on rhetoric and well-intentioned speeches rather than on concrete action Farhad Khoyratty examines the growth of consumerist culture in Mauritian society, a glaring example of which is the Caudan Waterfront He highlights that an average Mauritian expresses her/his rights as a citizen often only through her/his purchasing power to buy expensive commodities which are considered as symbols of power and prestige

The contributors to this volume have suggested policy makers to have a people-oriented approach to development Besides, they have shown concern with the promotion of human rights for a stable and sustainable development Social issues such as poverty, gender injustice, corruption, and language deficits for development have been highlighted No doubt, rights without responsibilities may prove to be problematic, but democracy without development is a more difficult proposition to be tackled and needs dynamic handling

Development is a slippery concept and it is difficult to comprehend it fully because of its multifaceted dimensions such as economic, political, social, cultural, and psychological To cap these, human-rights ideology focusing on protection and promotion of socioeconomic rights is a necessity for sustained development However, the political contradiction thrown up by conflicting forces within a society, vested interests of political and economic elites, discriminatory practices observed among different racial and ethnic groups, linguistic diversities, multi-religious denominations, etc have posed serious threats to make development of Mauritian society human-rights oriented

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S.R. Ahlawat (ed.): *Economic reforms and social transformation* Jaipur Rawat Publications, 2008, x + 434 pp , Rs 875 (hb) ISBN 81-316-0078-5

The economic reforms of the recent past represent the beginning of a new epoch in India The facets of economic reforms vis-à-vis liberalisation, privatisation, and globalisation have been radically transforming the world social order The volume under review, an outcome of the National Seminar held at the Department of Sociology, Maharshi Dayanand University, Rohtak, is situated in the backdrop of this complex, multifaceted, and uneven paths of social transformation set in motion in Indian society

The volume contains twenty-three papers organised under three sections Besides providing a summary of the papers, each section begins with an editorial introduction that seeks to locate the respective areas in the Indian context The papers were collected and compiled with a view to 'correlate the unevenness of economic reforms and its impact on transforming Indian society with diversity of socio-cultural dimensions'

In an attempt to provide an overview of the focal theme and major issues of the volume, the editor dwells on the complex dynamics and philosophy of the neo-liberal programmes spearheaded by the globalisation project He makes a pertinent observation with respect to the underlying economic philosophy of these programmes that relies 'more on market forces, dismantle controls, reduce the role of state, liberalise prices and replace the public with private sector' Moreover, 'It is based on the presumption that the public sector leads to inefficient allocation and utilisation of economic resources ' In the next paragraph of the introduction we find a state-centric proposition as a viable solution to the neo-liberal market predicament Hence, it is suggested that 'the process of economic reforms must set the agenda for social transformation in India, where the state must provide all its citizens with capabilities, opportunities and rights they need to exercise their own choice for a decent life' At this point, the role of public action within a framework of 'agency' in the discourses on development economics may also have been emphasised

The introduction, while elaborating the theoretical framework on the major theme and issues of the volume, provides a scholarly review of Joseph E Stiglitz's construct on 'economic development as social transformation' This is followed by a discussion on the underlying link between economic development and social progress wherein the pertinent questions of ecological sustainability and sustainable development are highlighted The editor then does not seem to take this

argument forward so as to highlight an appropriate theoretical framework that could encompass the main theme and issues of the volume Perhaps a discussion on the Gandhian developmental economics could have been relevant at this juncture, especially when the focus of the volume is on rural transformation in a market-dominated climate

It is appropriate and opportune that the volume is designed as 'an attempt to correlate the unevenness of economic reforms and its impact on transforming Indian society' However, its overall organisation into three broad sections and the articles contained in each of these sections seems to be not convincing as to serve the stated purpose Detached from the volume and viewed independently, each of these three sections and most of the articles therein are of great sociological significance But when all of them are perceived as part of a volume with a common context and theme, it appears to be an eclectic composition that does not seem logically coherent The readers, therefore, will come across articles on a wide range of topics from the impact of liberalisation, privatisation, and globalisation on the agrarian structure to facets of agricultural development in Punjab, to caste inequality to women's empowerment through 73rd amendment, to right to information, to atrocities against dalits, to issues of marriages below the legal age and across-region marriages, to issues of girl child and sex ratio, to Tibetan women A few of these topics could have been avoided to make the volume compact and thematically more focused

The first part of the volume titled 'Agrarian and Rural Transformation' is the most important part that is in tune with the context and theme around which the volume is woven together This is the smallest part with four papers dealing with some of the key conceptual issues of the neo-liberal policies on the agrarian economy The second part on the 'Rural Power Structure and Transformation of the Excluded' contains nine papers focusing on programmatic issues and implications of the generic theme of the volume The Panchyati Raj system constitutes the backdrop for most of the papers in this part Part III titled 'Population, Gender, Empowerment and Transformation' is the largest section with ten papers dealing with demographic and population issues with special reference to the female sex This part, as its title makes it clear, is remote to the theme of the volume, it could have formed a different volume altogether Notwithstanding this organisational flaw of the volume, the efforts of the editor in compiling both conceptual and programmatic papers centring on the theme 'social transformation', is commendable

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Yogesh Atal: *Changing Indian society* Jaipur Rawat Publications, 2006, 256 pp , Rs 575 (hb) ISBN 81-316-0034-3

There is no dearth of books on Indian Society, yet the book by Yogesh Atal is a valuable contribution to the study of Indian Society It serves as a lucid introduction to the complex culture of India The book has ten chapters, and the first chapter deals with the familiar topic of unity in diversity Unity in diversity is explained in terms of 'salad bowl' theory Unity is also shown in language (Hindi), food, dress, and other aspects of life Diversity in population, given in second chapter, is explained through statistics in terms of distribution in different states, sex ratio, children and the aged, and religion and literacy The author rightly warns the state and civil society of the imminent dangers regarding imbalanced sex ratio, age disparities, and changing population profile

The topics on urban India, rural India and tribal India are dealt in the next three chapters The topic on urban India starts with the definition and continues with growth and types Urbanisation is much faster in developing countries In India the urban population grew by 248 per cent between 1901 and 1951 and by 1,140 per cent between 1901 and 2001, from 25 million in 1901 to 285 million in 2001 Indian cities have been classified according to size, function, and age The focus here is more on the social structure of the city than the physical structure There is not much of a theoretical input, the study is mostly descriptive The concepts of agricultural crowding and village group are well explained Village typology is lucidly brought out on the basis of physical structure, caste, religion, and revenue Institutions such as *jajmani* system and *panchayat* are discussed in detail The chapter on tribal India starts with the definition and continues with the topic of geographical distribution, social and linguistic distribution, levels of economy, and forms of social organisation The topic on degrees of cultural contact is limited in exposition, and we find only the author's typology The chapter concludes with the topic of development planning for the tribal areas

The next two chapters deal with the familiar institutions such as caste, and marriage, family and kinship In the chapter on *varna* and *jati*, the author brings out subtle meanings of the term 'caste' and mentions the difficulties in defining caste Change in the caste system is understood through the process of sanskritisation The author rightly concludes that caste has not disappeared, it has merely shown its resilience to adapt to the changing situation However, neither the chapter on caste nor the book itself has any mention about Scheduled Castes who constitute an important part of Indian Society In the chapter on marriage, family and kinship, families are classified on the basis of marriage, residence, size of

the family, composition of the family, authority structure, and decent and inheritance

The chapter on status of women is comprehensive, with discussion on sex ratio, literacy rates, work participation rates, and social legislations concerning age at marriage, dowry, divorce, and women in politics The chapter on Indian Polity is a welcome addition as most books on Indian society do not deal with polity It starts with Independence and continues through the division of Indian Union into states The changing party structure is well described by reference to the process as of fission and fusion Furthermore, various processes of Indian democracy – change from one-party rule to coalition politics, dynasty politics, changing voter profile, vote bank politics, and the role of judiciary – are highlighted

The last chapter on changing India brings out the changes in demography and in social institutions such as marriage, family, and caste Other changes are indicated in the field of literacy, transport, mass media, and political culture Changes are also indicated in the process of industrialisation and urbanisation However, no mention is made of the changes in the tertiary sector The book is well illustrated by photographs and tables and it makes interesting reading

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2 In the first instance, send only the hard copy of the typescript (two copies) If the article is accepted for publication, the contributor(s) will be required to send the soft copy of the article as an Email attachment processed on MSWord for Windows

3 Within the text, adopt the author-date method of citation minus the comma for example, (Lobo 2002) If more than one work of an author is cited, separate the years of publication with a comma (Pandey 1996, 1999) Separate the page numbers of citations by a colon (Uberoi 2002 264) and hyphenate the inclusive numbers (Uberoi 2002 264-65) When more than one author is cited, the entries should be chronological with works of different authors separated by a semicolon (Omvedt 1990, Hasan 1994, Mayaram 1997) For co-authored works, cite both names (Jayal and Pai 2001), for works authored by three or more authors, use '*et al*' after the first name (Patel *et al* 2002) If a citation is repeated within a paragraph without intervening citations, use *ibid*, instead of repeating the author's name again, and provide the relevant page number(s) (*ibid* 32) If gazetteers, reports and works of governmental organisations and other institutions are cited, mention the name of the organisation/institution sponsoring the publication in the citation, fully spelt out at its first occurrence (Government of India 2003), and use its abbreviation/acronym in subsequent citations (GOI 2003)

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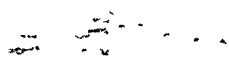

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